

ON  
THE  
MOVE

The Situation of At-risk and Displaced  
Artists and Culture Professionals

# Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders

Volume 3  
Case Studies



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**On the Move** is the international information network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, gathering 86 members from 32 countries. Since 2002, On the Move provides regular, up-to-date and free information on mobility opportunities, conditions and funding, and advocates for the value of cross-border cultural mobility. Co-funded by the European Union and the French Ministry of Culture, On the Move is implementing an ambitious multi-annual programme to build the capacities of local, regional, national, European and international stakeholders for the sustainable development of our cultural ecosystems.

On the Move regularly commissions researchers to investigate different themes closely related to the network's activities and the work carried out by its members. Reflecting on transversal concerns and key areas of artistic and cultural mobility, the network tries to establish a clearer picture of the current movements and trends while formulating policy recommendations.

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# Introduction

By Yohann Floch

We are pleased to publish the third volume of our international research initiative, presenting a comprehensive examination of the support structures available to at-risk and displaced artists and culture professionals, bringing together 14 detailed chapters that explore both the achievements and the persistent challenges within this field. Through these case studies, comparative analyses, and syntheses, we aim to illuminate the conditions, successes, and limitations of existing initiatives, while proposing actionable recommendations for their replication, scaling, or adaptation.

This volume builds on the collective efforts of 12 researchers, the On the Move Advisory Committee, and the professionals who generously shared their insights and experiences through focus groups and interviews. Their contributions have been instrumental in shaping the depth and relevance of this work. At its core, our research seeks to identify policies and practices in Europe, the United Kingdom, and the United States that foster the active inclusion and long-term support of displaced artists and culture professionals. Since 2018, On the Move has been at the forefront of this endeavour through its working group on (en)forced mobility, co-led by Dr Mary Ann DeVlieg and Birgit Ellinghaus. The concept of '(en)forced mobility' encapsulates the complex realities of artists and culture professionals whose relocation—whether for professional opportunities, such as residencies or exhibitions, or to escape censorship, conflict, or persecution—is constrained by circumstances beyond their control. These individuals often face legal, administrative, and social barriers that limit their mobility, stability, and ability to continue their artistic practice.

This third volume follows two earlier publications: [Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition – Volume 1 Scoping Review](#), which mapped existing literature, reports, and toolkits; and [Policy and Practice in the EU: Pathways, Impediments and Patchwork Solutions – Volume 2 Cultural Policy Analysis](#), which evaluated cultural policy frameworks at the EU and Member States' levels. The present volume shifts its focus to practical implementation, presenting a series of case studies that highlight the operational realities of supporting at-risk and displaced arts workers. Each chapter explores the design, delivery, and impact of specific programmes, identifying both their strengths and the persistent challenges they encounter—from bureaucratic hurdles and funding constraints to the need for holistic, long-term support.

One of the most compelling lessons emerging from the analysis of programmes is the importance of **prioritising the agency and autonomy of displaced artists**. For instance, the Artists' Community Network in New York City, as discussed in Chapter 2, demonstrates how peer-to-peer mentorship, professional development, and community-building can create a supportive environment for artists navigating the complexities of relocation. Similarly, the Martin Roth-Initiative in Germany, explored in Chapter 5, highlights the importance of confidentiality and tailored support for artists from fragile geopolitical contexts, ensuring their safety while enabling them to continue their creative work. However, these programmes often face significant constraints, particularly in terms of funding and administrative capacity. The rise of right-wing populism and shifting political priorities, as noted

in Chapter 3, further complicate the landscape, making it increasingly difficult for initiatives to secure stable, long-term resources.

The **need for adaptability in programme design** is another critical takeaway. The Ukrainian Solidarity Residencies Programme in Finland exemplifies how flexibility in residency duration and collaborative decision-making can enhance responsiveness to artists' evolving needs. The programme's ability to adjust its approach—such as reducing residency lengths in response to changing circumstances—illustrates the value of ongoing evaluation and agility. Yet, even the most adaptive programmes struggle with sustainability, particularly as public and media attention shifts away from crises. This volatility underscores the necessity of diversified funding models that combine public, private, and international sources to ensure continuity and reduce dependency on short-term political priorities. The TEJA network's efforts to maintain momentum and expand international collaborations highlight the challenges of sustaining support in the face of shifting political and media attention. Both programmes, detailed in Chapter 12, underscore the need for long-term planning, diversified funding, and strong community ties to ensure that artists can rebuild their lives and careers in a stable and supportive environment.

**Bureaucratic complexity and legal precarity** remain pervasive challenges for at-risk artists. As Chapter 10 reveals, the EU Pilot Fellowship Scheme SAFE for At-Risk Researchers offers a potential blueprint for addressing these issues, particularly through its systematic approach to verifying credentials and securing residency permits. However, replicating such a scheme for artists would require addressing the unique challenges of the cultural sector, including the lack of standardised credentials and the prevalence of freelance and short-term contracts. Cultural organisations, unlike academic institutions, lack the administrative infrastructure to navigate these complexities, which often results in artists facing prolonged uncertainty regarding their legal status and social rights.

**Mental health and well-being** are also central to the effectiveness of support programmes, yet they are frequently overlooked. Chapter 8 emphasises the importance of embedding mental health resources, trauma-informed care, and emotional support for both artists and the staff who work with them. The New York City Safe Haven Residency Programme, discussed in Chapter 14, integrates mental health support and community connections to mitigate isolation and build resilience among displaced artists. However, the emotional labour involved in supporting at-risk artists can lead to burnout among staff, particularly in under-resourced organisations. This highlights the need for institutional support systems, including training, supervision, and access to professional counselling, to ensure that programmes remain sustainable and effective. The New York City Safe Haven Residency Programme's emphasis on peer-to-peer networks demonstrates how artists can support each other in navigating the challenges of relocation, as well as the importance of preparing artists for the transition out of residency programmes. The loss of housing support, for example, has forced the programme to adapt its approach, underscoring the necessity of flexibility and transparency in managing artists' expectations.

**Collaboration and networking** emerge as recurring strengths across successful initiatives. The Rawabet project, supported by the Creative Europe programme, analysed in Chapter 4, demonstrates how partnerships between organisations—across sectors and borders—can pool resources, share expertise, and invest in art making. These collaborations are particularly valuable in addressing the systemic exclusion of artists from marginalised or conflict-affected regions. However, the precarity of many small and medium-sized cultural organisations limits their capacity to host artists over the long term. Building the capacity of these organisations, through training, funding, and network coordination, is essential to ensuring that they can provide meaningful and sustained support. Larger institutions, while better resourced, may face bureaucratic inertia or shifting priorities,

which can hinder their ability to respond nimbly to artists' needs. Striking a balance between the agility of smaller organisations and the stability of larger ones is therefore a key consideration for future programme development.

The **role of cities and local authorities** is equally pivotal in creating supportive environments for at-risk artists. Networks such as ICORN and Shelter City, discussed in Chapter 9, illustrate how cities can act as safe havens by investing in local coordination teams, building partnerships with cultural organisations, and advocating for supportive policies at the national and European levels. The establishment of national and international networks of cities can facilitate knowledge-sharing, peer learning, and the development of common standards for hosting artists. Local authorities are uniquely positioned to bridge the gap between grassroots initiatives and broader policy frameworks, ensuring that support is both contextually relevant and systematically integrated.

The PAUSE programme in France, analysed in Chapter 3, offers another instructive example of how **local and national coordination** can enhance the effectiveness of support schemes. By working closely with the French home affairs administrations, PAUSE has been able to streamline administrative procedures for artists, ensuring that they can access the necessary documentation and social rights. However, the programme's limited capacity to provide long-term support highlights the need for more sustainable and diversified funding models.

The Martin Roth-Initiative's approach to building **networks of host organisations and alumni**, as described in Chapter 5, further illustrates the value of peer support and knowledge-sharing. By fostering a community of practice, the initiative enables artists and host organisations to learn from each other, share challenges, and develop best practices. This model not only enhances the quality of support provided but also creates a sense of solidarity and mutual aid that is critical for long-term resilience. The initiative's use of

digital spaces, such as the online residency for Ukrainian feminist artists, also demonstrates how technology can be leveraged to support artists who are unable to relocate physically.

The Prince Claus Fund's Artist Urgency Fund in the Netherlands, explored in Chapter 6, provides another example of how **targeted, trust-based funding** can address **immediate needs** while also promoting long-term recovery. By offering direct financial assistance and temporary relocation support, the fund enables artists to continue their work in their **home regions or nearby areas**, reducing the need for long-distance displacement. This approach not only preserves artists' connections to their communities but also strengthens local cultural ecosystems, which are often overlooked in favour of relocation-focused programmes.

The analysis of the EU Pilot Fellowship Scheme SAFE for At-Risk Researchers reveals the potential for replicating such models within the cultural sector, provided that adequate administrative and financial support is in place. The fragmented and under-resourced nature of the cultural sector presents significant challenges, particularly in terms of securing **access to visas and residency permits**. Addressing these issues would require a concerted effort to build the capacity of cultural organisations and streamline administrative processes. Chapter 13 proposes the establishment of centralised hubs for providing targeted, up-to-date information on cross-border mobility and administrative processes. These points would not only direct artists to the appropriate resources but also advocate for systemic changes, such as simplified visa procedures and greater flexibility in administrative processes. By pooling the expertise of public and private bodies, these consortia could offer comprehensive support that is both culturally competent and responsive to artists' evolving needs.

The need for a systemic shift in how at-risk artists are supported is a recurring theme throughout this volume. Chapter 11, for example, calls for the elaboration of a **UN Plan of Action for the**

**Safety of Artists**, inspired by existing frameworks such as the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity. Such a plan would provide a normative framework for protecting artists, regardless of their personal circumstances, and ensure that support is shaped by a consistent set of principles. This would not only raise the profile of artists' rights on the international agenda but also create synergies between different stakeholders, including states, cultural organisations, and non-profit actors.

The analysis and recommendations presented in this volume underscore the urgency of creating a more responsive, inclusive, and sustainable support system for at-risk and displaced artists. While the challenges are significant—ranging from funding instability and bureaucratic barriers to the emotional toll of displacement—the successes documented here demonstrate what is possible when institutions, policymakers, and communities work together with creativity, empathy, and determination.

For the cultural sector, the priority must be to adopt holistic and long-term support models that address artists' professional, legal, social, and psychological needs. This includes providing stable funding for residencies, integrating mental health resources, and facilitating access to legal and administrative assistance. Programmes should also prioritise flexibility and artist agency, ensuring that support is tailored to the unique circumstances of each individual. Strengthening collaboration and networking across sectors will further enhance the effectiveness of support schemes, enabling organisations to pool resources, share expertise, and avoid duplication of efforts.

The European Union and its Member States have a critical role to play in developing a dedicated fellowship scheme for at-risk arts workers, drawing on the success of the SAFE programme for researchers. Following the 2023 [Council Conclusions on At-risk Artists and Displaced Artists](#), the EU should also work to harmonise visa and residency policies for displaced professionals, recognising the specificities of careers and ensuring that artists and culture

professionals can access social rights. Increasing and diversifying funding, supporting cross-border networks, and promoting research and data collection are additional steps that the EU can take to strengthen the support ecosystem for at-risk artists and culture professionals.

By developing inclusive and accessible programmes, fostering public and community engagement, and advocating for national and EU-level support, cities can create environments where artists feel welcomed and empowered to continue their work. Joining or establishing networks of local authorities committed to supporting at-risk artists will further enhance the collective capacity to respond to the needs of displaced arts professionals, ensuring that support is both contextually relevant and systematically integrated.

Ultimately, the responsibility for creating a more equitable and supportive environment for at-risk and displaced artists rests with all stakeholders—cultural organisations, local authorities, national governments, and international bodies alike.

This publication not only outlines operational recommendations and highlights potential developments for existing support programmes but also lays the groundwork for the fourth and final phase of our research. Conceived as a co-design exercise with relocated artists, researchers, and cultural stakeholders, this phase aims to propose a first set of instruments—whether new, replicated, upscaled, or adapted—to better support at-risk and displaced artists. The results, including detailed descriptions of these instruments, will be published from November 2025 onwards.

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our initial supporters, including the European Union for co-funding our multiannual programme *New Solidarities*, the French Ministry of Culture, and CEC ArtsLink, which will host the presentation of our findings in New York City in November 2025. We hope these efforts will mark meaningful steps toward ensuring that arts professionals are not only protected but also empowered to continue enriching our shared cultural landscape.



# CHAPTER 1

## At-Risk and Displaced Arts Workers: Analysing On the Move's Database of International Open Calls for Participation

By Claire Rosslyn Wilson

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## This chapter presents an analysis of calls for cultural mobility opportunities posted to the On the Move website during a period of more than four years from 1 January 2020 to 27 May 2025.

The data analysed here reflects the website's editorial policy and focus, which is on funded programmes that cover at least some of the costs of travel (or that offer remuneration in the case of online/remote programmes). On the Move does not include any calls that have application fees. The calls that are posted to the website are also generally one-off calls or relate to temporary or shifting programmes rather than permanent ones (which are separately listed in the mobility funding guides). Additionally, the calls are generally open to applicants of more than two nationalities (for example, there are not many bilateral calls published).

It is worth noting, that since this data is analysing open calls that are not for long-term projects it is possible that it does not capture ongoing initiatives or funding that does not have a system of open calls with specific deadlines. For example, the [Artist at Risk Connection](#) (based in the USA) provides a last-resort grant programme to address the immediate needs of artists and their families in crisis (for which there is no open call as such, given the emergency nature of the support) or the [Martin Roth-Initiative](#)'s temporary relocation stays for at-risk artists and cultural actors in their region of origin, either with the support of host organisations or through direct funding (which is accepted on an on-going basis). There may well be many such initiatives that are not represented in the figures here (although some may be present in On the Move's Mobility Funding Guides).

Artists at risk are not listed as a separate category on the website, nor is there a category that specifically covers the costs related to issues faced by artists at risk. Additionally, On the Move records information on the organisers of the call and the destination, and not the beneficiaries

(as it lies outside On the Move's organisational capacity to follow up the 500–600+ calls that are published on the website every year). Therefore, it can be challenging to trace the ways in which calls may target at-risk artists.

A key approach to mitigate these challenges was to conduct extensive keyword searches to gather together calls that are related to artists at risk. The terms used were the following: at risk, refugee, displaced, exile, freedom, rights, Ukraine/Ukrainian, Palestine/Palestinian, Syria/Syrian, censorship, Sudan/Sudanese, Lebanon/Lebanese, Afghanistan/Afghan, UNESCO (related to some of their programmes), forced, relocation, emergency, crisis, human rights, protection, solidarity, safe, and political issues. This search collected calls which contained these terms in the title and in the body of the call, as it was reproduced on the news section of the On the Move website.

Some of these terms were less relevant for artists at risk; for example, 'solidarity' produced many calls that evolved around ideas of democracy or an abstract and very wide reflection on what solidarity might mean, while 'protection' returned many calls related to environmental sustainability. The chosen terms were purposefully broad in an effort to capture as many relevant calls as possible, after which the calls were reviewed individually to assess their relevance for artists at risk.

In this process it could be observed that there are calls that are challenging to categorise due to the open or vague nature of the description of the call. Some of the opportunities called for artists who address socio-political issues, which could include those who address issues related to artists at risk, but the call might not provide the curatorial support, or financial or logistical

support for someone coming from a situation of risk. Therefore, these very open calls were not included here.

In spite of the extensive research, it must be highlighted that this keyword search of the On the Move database is a less precise way of analysing the calls and it is possible that some calls we missed in this filtering process.

Of the over 3,300 calls published on the On the Move news section of the website

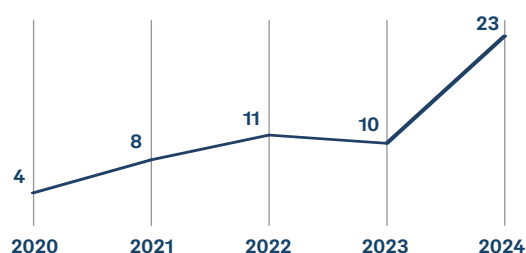
between 1 January 2020 and 27 May 2025, there were 99 calls identified as being relevant to the topic of arts workers at risk (2.9% of the total calls). In general, these fell into three main areas: calls that were targeted to artists at risk, calls that address the theme of artists at risk or that worked with communities who might be at risk, and calls which were on unrelated themes but were open to artist workers who might be coming from countries which are experiencing war. Since these categories are of quite different natures, they will be analysed per group.

## Published opportunities open to artists at risk

Of the 99 calls identified, there were 60 that targeted arts workers at risk. This included 45 calls that were principally for arts workers at risk, with another 15 that mentioned arts workers at risk within a wider call. An example of the latter includes calls that are open to anyone but that state ‘special consideration given to those who have faced political hardship’<sup>1</sup> or calls in which artists at risk might be included in a wider group, for example a programme that ‘prioritises artists facing fewer opportunities, including migrants, refugees, and [those] living in rural or remote areas, as well as young artists from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds, who face economic and social barriers.’<sup>2</sup> There are also a number of these calls that explicitly reference Ukrainian (and to a lesser extent Belarussian) artists, in the context of the Russian full scale invasion of Ukraine; some of these calls included [ISSP: Call for Photographers for FUTURES Baltic Talents 2024](#) (Online / Croatia), [Nida Art Colony: Residency for Cultural Practitioners Researching the Baltic States](#) (Lithuania), [ERSTE Foundation: Artist in Residence Programme at Q21/MuseumsQuartier](#) (Austria), and [Meeting Point: Residencies for Performing and Visual Artists 2024](#) (Denmark, Greece, Poland).

It can be seen that the number of calls recorded on On the Move open (partially or exclusively) to at-risk arts workers has increased over the period from 2020 to 2024, with a sharp rise for the number of calls in 2024 (to a total of 23 calls over the year, up from 10 in 2023).

### Number of calls for at-risk arts workers per year



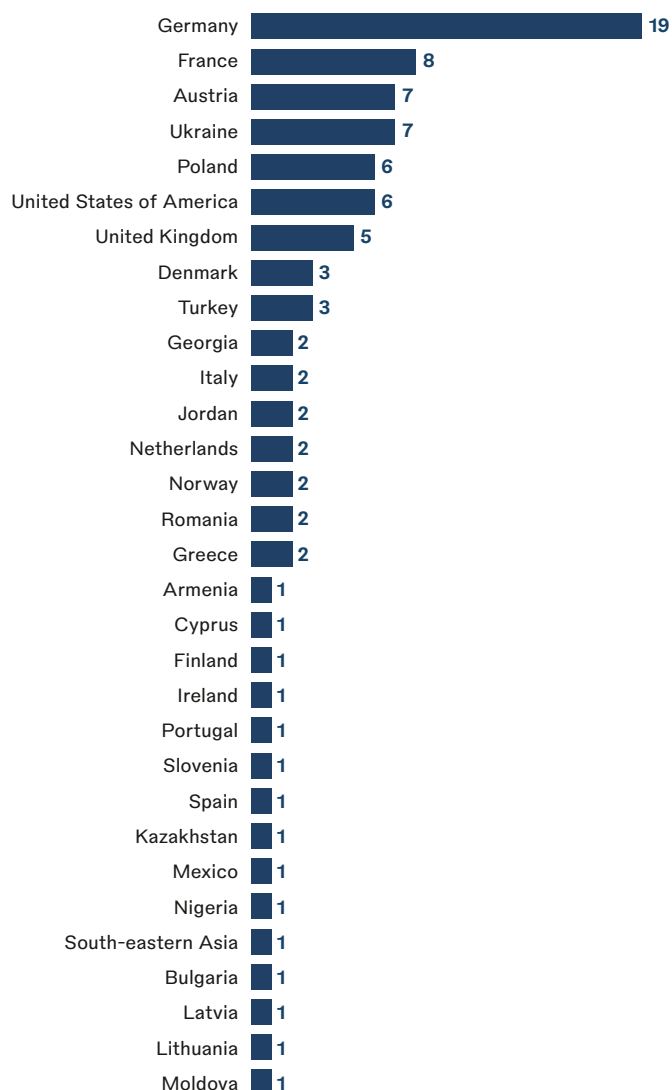
### The organisers

Of these 60 calls that targeted (or at least partially targeted) arts workers at risk, the majority had organisers based in Germany (19), followed by France (8), Austria (7), Ukraine (7), Poland (6), USA (6), UK (5), Denmark (3), and Turkey (3), with more countries having one or two organisers with calls (see the graph below for the full list).

1 For example, the call [The Vera List Center for Art and Politics > 'As for Protocols' Fellowship Open Call](#).

2 Such as the call [CastCeramics: Residency and Workshops in Ceramics 2025 \(Austria, Poland, Italy\)](#).

## Countries of organisers of calls for at-risk arts workers



*(Note: There are slightly more organisations than calls, as there are sometimes two organisers per call.)*

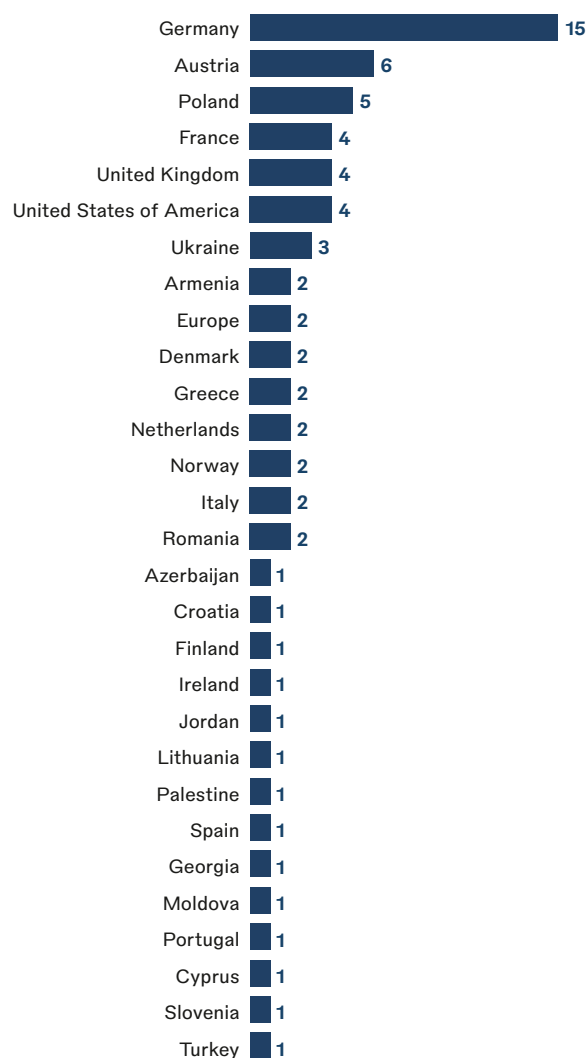
Of these calls, 15 were identified as being funded by the European Union (nine through Creative Europe and six through other programmes) and 43 calls had other sources of funding.

The majority of the organisations had just one call recorded in On the Move's database. Exceptions to this were the Martin Roth-Initiative (with five calls), zusa (with four calls), The Vera List Center for Art and Politics (three calls), Ars Electronica (two calls), Institut français (two calls), Safemuse (two calls) and the partnership of D6: Culture in Transit, MedeArts and Arthereistanbul (two calls).

## Typology of calls

With regards to destination of calls targeting (or at least partially targeting) at-risk arts workers, Germany is again the country with the greatest number of calls (at 15), followed by Austria (six), Poland (five), France (four), the United Kingdom (four), the United States of America (four), and Ukraine (three), as well as a number of countries with one or two calls (see the graph below for the full list).

## Countries of destination of calls accessible to at-risk arts workers



*(Note: There may be more destinations listed than calls, as several calls had more than one destination.)*

The majority of these calls were in-person or hybrid (51), with only four calls delivered solely online and five calls unspecified. In terms of the

type of opportunities offered, residencies were the most common mode (at 28 calls), followed by project funding (with 10 calls) and fellowships (with nine calls). With regards to artform, the most common one was by far for cross disciplinary practices at 35 calls (this is also the most common artform across all On the Move calls), followed by visual arts (with 14 calls), performing arts (with nine calls), music and sound (with six calls), and literature (with four calls).

In terms of who they targeted, a total of 43 calls were for individuals, 10 were for organisations and collectives, and seven calls were open to both individuals and organisations and collectives. In terms of target groups, the majority (39 calls) were open only to artists, while a further 14 calls were open to artists in conjunction with other roles (such as curators, producers and managers, or researchers and critics). There were 12 calls open to producers and managers (with six calls exclusively open to them), nine for curators, and six for researchers and critics.

It is worth noting that of the calls open (partially or exclusively) to at-risk arts workers, only three provided costs to obtain a visa (namely the [TEJA Emergency Residencies Programme for Artists and Cultural Practitioners Living in Palestine 2025](#) in Spain, the [French Institute: Sawa](#)

[Sawa Residency Programme for Palestinian Artists](#), and the [Institute of International Education Artist Protection Fund](#)). Where some artists coming from situations of risk can take advantage of structures such as the temporary protection status for Ukrainians in the European Union, there are many who need to go through complex visa applications process. If this is not supported, it can create a barrier for accessing some opportunities.

For example, the Mobility Information Points – organisations that help artists and culture professionals with the administrative issues of cross-border mobility<sup>3</sup> – provided 134 consultations for issues related to artists-at-risk in 2024 (6.1% of the total consultations). As reported in [Cultural Mobility Flows Report, Mobility Information Points at Work 2024](#), the most common nationalities of these artists-at-risk were Iranian, Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Turkish and Palestinian. Their destination countries were mostly Germany (86.6%) followed by France (11.2%), Portugal (1.5%) and Austria (0.7%). This indicates that there is a need for more support on the complex issues related to artists at risk, even in cases where there are established schemes on a European level to support those coming from countries such as Ukraine.

## At risk as a research theme

The keyword search identified a number of calls that, although they were not necessarily targeted at artists at risk, they did address some relevant topics as a theme. There were 19 calls that were identified as being particularly relevant. (As mentioned above, there are calls that mentioned socio-political issues as a theme, but these were too general and broad and are therefore not included here.)

Some of these opportunities called for applicants that followed the legacy of certain individuals, such as the open call for artists and scholars for [residency on legacy of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish](#), the [Carl Zuckmayer Scholarship](#) or the [Stanley Greene Legacy Prize and Fellowship](#) for early career visual storytellers.

3 Key issues include visas, social insurance, taxes, and customs. Read more about the Mobility Information Points' 2024 activities in the [Cultural Mobility Flows Report, Mobility Information Points at Work 2024](#).

Other calls were related to exile, freedom or conflict (without specifically calling for arts workers with direct experience in these areas), while others were targeted at academic research in these and related topics. One example of the latter is the [Europe-Asia Research Platform on Forced Migration ‘Ethics of Solidarity, Care, and Protection’ camp](#) in India. In this case the Institute for Human Sciences, in collaboration with the Mahanirban Calcutta Research Group, sought to decentre Europe-focused scholarship, debates, and policies on forced migration and invited scholars, activists, teachers, care workers including doctors, nurses, and other paramedical staff, journalists, photographers, filmmakers, media persons, writers, poets, theatre personalities, musicians, painters, and/or public functionaries engaged in care and protection work. In this example, the call not only focused on forced migration as a topic, but it also sought to gather together people who work with those experiencing forced migration. The UNESCO-Aschberg Programme<sup>4</sup> supporting policy reform in the cultural and creative industries is another example of a call that focuses on those working with artists at risk, in this case governments and public institutions of UNESCO Member States, as well as to civil society organisations, that develop initiatives aimed at protecting and promoting artistic freedom, including the status of the artist.

This example is interesting, as it touches upon an issue that was raised in the [‘Mobility Webinar: Mental Health, Well-Being and International Cultural Mobility’](#) report, which is that those who support artists at risk also need support in the form of additional funding and resources, training and/or mental health support in order to provide adequate assistance the people they are receiving. The Martin Roth-Initiative (MRI) in Germany is a relevant example here, as it provides financial support for additional personnel for the host organisation and counselling by the MRI and further training (for example on topics such as

safety, sensitive public relations, psycho-social support), in addition to support for the artists themselves. This initiative provides adequate resources not only for the artists, but also for the cultural workers, creating a supportive environment that might address challenges such as burnout or overwhelm due to the lack of skills in a specific area.

There were also calls identified that explored the ways in which Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has changed societies in Europe. Examples of this can be seen in countries at close proximity to Ukraine or Russia, such as the [Narva Art Residency](#) to create sculptural artworks in public space in the Estonian-Russian border town of Narva. Due to its location and the current geopolitical situation, the city has become a point of attention and as well a place where Ukrainian refugees enter Europe and the call sought to explore the issues this location raises through engagement with the community.

Another interesting example is the [Laboratory-residency ‘Performing Togetherness’](#) in Romania, which sought to address the crisis within the cultural sector following the pandemic period and the war in Ukraine, through a process of collective reflection and creation on the future of a (post)war Europe. The laboratory-residency was open to mid-career participants with experience in collaborative practices from Austria, Germany, Poland, Romania and Ukraine who were willing to think, reflect and connect with the nature, the city of Bucharest, people’s emotions as well as engaging in a critical thinking process about a greener future.

While all but two of the calls with a theme related to artists at risk were organised by organisations based in Europe<sup>5</sup>, there were two interesting examples of calls that brought together intercontinental experiences: the Europe-Asia Research Platform on Forced Migration mentioned above and the call [‘Beyond the Silence’](#), an

4 See for example the [2021](#) and [2023](#) call.

5 There was a [call organised by the Colombian Ministry of Culture and the National Museum of Colombia](#), for an exhibition project on the theme of conflict.

online collaborative project for photographers from Southeast Asia, Mexico, Nigeria, Ukraine and Kazakhstan. Initiated by Magnum Photos in partnership with five organisations around the world, the call paired in tandem participants based on their proposals (one photographer from a partner country and one Ukrainian photographer) in an online collaboration that was aimed at sharing their experiences, to support and counsel each other, and to know more about their research topic from a different perspective. This call used the online space to facilitate an exchange between people from diverse regions but who might have knowledge and experiences in common.

It is worth noting that arts workers at risk can experience intersecting challenges related to their gender, sexuality, disability or more. Given the nature of On the Move's data collection structure, it is not possible to gain a full understanding of the ways in which these intersecting experiences might (or might not) be taken into consideration in open calls. However, there were a few calls that especially focused on gender, such as the [Elizabeth Kostova Foundation Women in the Mountains Residency in Bulgaria](#), the [Halaqat 2025 residency for photographers](#) from Algeria, Libya, Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine and EU in Egypt (which focused on gender and care as a theme), or the [‘Culture Utopias’ residency](#) call in Romania, Poland, and Ukraine, which offered additional financial support for those with a family member (to cover childcare, per diem or travel costs).

## A focus on some regions

The final area that was identified in this research were calls that might not have addressed artists at risk or related themes, but rather calls that involved countries that are undergoing conflict, especially Ukraine, Palestine, or Syria. In this case, the examples provided are only a small sample, given the challenge of identifying calls based on geographic eligibility. For example, a call that is open to applicants in/from Southeast Asia might attract an artist at risk fleeing conflict in Myanmar even if the call does not otherwise seem relevant; this is before taking into consideration those who move to avoid censorship, persecution, natural disasters, violations of human rights, extreme poverty, or other difficulties that necessitated their departure from home in a manner not purely voluntarily, which would require more in-depth analysis to trace from country to country.

When exploring the calls published by region, it can also be noted that there are many more calls available to those at risk based in Europe (including in many cases geographical Europe, which involved Ukraine), as opposed to other

regions. In 2024, 70.6% of the calls published on On the Move involved organisers or destinations in Europe. As mentioned, these figures do not necessarily reflect the beneficiaries, but those with access to European visas, agreements or specific protection status' have easier access to such opportunities.

That said, there were some interesting examples of exchange identified when exploring calls by regions. For example, there were several calls supporting exchange between Europe and Palestine, such as the Goethe-Institut's Mishkal art residency programme for Palestinian and European artists (the [first](#) and the [second](#) call), a 2023 [residency between young Catalan and Palestinian playwrights](#), and a 2022 [residency exchange on the topic of soil](#) with artists from UK, Palestine and Italy.

Other calls involved visits to Ukraine (after the Russian full-scale invasion), such as [Insha Osvita's visits](#) to Ukraine for Europe-based cultural workers and artists, [Vidnova's](#)



[placements](#) in Ukraine Civil society organisations or the [Jam Factory Art Center's call](#) for theatre and performance creators (as well as the online [two-day intensive course 'Artists Without Borders'](#) for artists from Ukraine and EU member states).

For artists from the SWANA region, there are some interesting examples of programmes, such as the [Rawabet programme](#) for artists from the Arab Region residing in Europe, or the [Halaqat supra-regional project](#) connecting and supporting artists and cultural practitioners from European and Arab countries through residencies, public events, grants and exchanges focused on care and gender.

## Some concluding questions

This chapter provides an overview of some of the calls related to arts workers at risk and the ways in which the diverse approaches are represented in the calls. The number of calls explicitly or partially targeting at-risk artists increased steadily, especially in 2024, with Germany emerging as one of the most active countries in both organising and hosting such opportunities. However, access barriers remain, particularly around visa support; only three calls offered direct assistance with visa costs, underscoring a significant gap in practical accessibility. The work of support organisations is therefore vital, especially in helping navigate the bureaucratic and logistical hurdles that many at-risk artists face.


The analysis also raised a number of questions, such as:

- Are all the stages of arts workers at risk covered in different funding programmes (such as support for emergency needs, initial resettlement or long-term adaptation)?
- Are the diverse needs at each stage taken into consideration at the point of programme design?
- Are the intersecting needs also taken into consideration?

- Is there enough additional support provided for administrative burdens faced by artists at risk (such as support for visa applications)?
- What are the support systems provided to both artists at risk and the cultural organisations developing these short-term opportunities (such as professional development, mental health or wellbeing, skills upgrade)?
- In what ways are these short-term opportunities supplemented by long-term and holistic approaches?
- What is needed to ensure that there are more such open calls present across diverse countries in Creative Europe and beyond?

From an analysis of open calls it is often not possible to gain a deep understanding of the complex needs and challenges facing artists at risk and organisations seeking to provide opportunities for them. However, it is a snapshot of different approaches, which can perhaps be further complemented with a deeper analysis on different approaches, such as those that can be found in the following chapters of this publication.





# CHAPTER 2

## Opening Our Minds: Including Incoming Artists in the Communities and Cultural Sector of the USA

by Mary Ann DeVlieg

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This text highlights some key issues critical to supporting displaced and relocated artists in the USA. While there are many differences in infrastructures, policy frameworks and professional environments between the USA and Europe, support for all artists, anywhere remain similar: education and training; professional integration into the arts sector, networks and networking; access to the resources necessary for creation, production and diffusion through supportive organisations; and access to existing and potential publics.

This article focuses on how artists are supported to integrate into the USA's professional arts environment in terms of training, language support, networks and artistic/professional development. It explores the objectives of hosting organisations and how obstacles are overcome. In the currently unstable USA, especially with regards to immigration policy, how is funding for residency programmes and artists negotiated? What is considered good practice, and what more could be done if resources were available?

## Methodology

This is a synthesis of only the most frequently cited practices and issues. Interviews were undertaken with 12 key organisations across the continental USA. Five have what is termed here as 'dedicated' programmes to host or relocate at-risk and persecuted artists, including two — [Artistic Freedom Initiative](#) (AFI) and [Tamizdat](#) — that additionally offer pro bono legal services. The others are [City of Asylum](#), [Pittsburgh](#), the [Artist Protection Fund](#) (APF) and the [Artists at Risk Connection](#) (ARC) that runs several programmes supporting at-risk artists internationally. One interviewee, [CEC ArtsLink](#), is dedicated to artists' international exchange with the USA; four host international artists in what is here termed 'general' artists' residency

programmes ([Kala Art Institute](#) in Berkeley California, [Grand Central Art Center](#) in Santa Ana California, [Unlisted Projects](#) in Austin, Texas and [Hyde Park Art Center](#)) in Chicago, Illinois. A funder (the Trust for Mutual Understanding), and a network ([ONWARDS](#), Opportunity Network for At-Risk Writers, Artists, Rights Defenders and Scholars) were also interviewed. Given the time and space restrictions, the limited list of interviewees was subjective, based on recommendations by On the Move members, and is indicative rather than comprehensive. Responses, nevertheless, provide critical insights. The list of interviewees and short organisational profiles are recorded in the Annexes.

## Geographical scope

In the current context of uncertainty regarding visas for incomers into the USA, cooperation and collaboration between the USA and Europe

might become crucial<sup>6</sup>. USA-based organisations such as the Artistic Freedom Initiative and the Artists at Risk Connection have already opened

6 On the Move's [Cultural Mobility Funding Guide for the United States of America](#) was published in 2015. It was partially updated on the occasion of the publication of the [Cultural Mobility Funding Guide for the Caribbean](#) in 2024. Since then, and most recently (June 2025), the US State Department that issues visas and manages several fellowship and exchange programmes, has issued a pause in issuing visas while it considers initiating more advanced vetting procedures for candidates, including reviewing social media histories. See Tamizdat's webpage [FAQs for travelling to the US now](#), 26 March 2025.

European branches. Artists may prefer coming to Europe for residencies and exchanges to avoid potential problems with the USA immigration authorities. Artists' residencies determined as 'exchanges' often use visa type J-1 for temporary visits, but even these visas are currently on hold<sup>7</sup>. The European arts sector still favours a public-subsidy model while in the USA, artists and arts organisations rely more on commercial earnings and philanthropic donors. As donors become less interested in supporting international arts,

this support is at risk<sup>8</sup>. However, in Europe there is also increasing pushback against immigration and continuing stress on culture budgets. Thus, there are lessons to be shared across the Atlantic regarding how best the arts sector can support displaced artists to develop their work and expand their communities once they have left their countries temporarily or permanently. And, as many repeated in interviews, 'It is very urgent: we need to collaborate and exchange now more than ever; we need alternative models and blueprints'.

## Initial observations

Clearly, there are experienced and capable actors and hosting initiatives highly motivated to support the immediate as well as ongoing development of artists who have been displaced from home countries and are in the USA. This relatively new sector is maturing and would benefit from more peer-exchanges, together with artists, and exploration of the deeper values and differences that underlie 'hospitality'. Although this study is primarily focused on Europe, it must be strongly repeated that all of this work takes place in an interdependent world and our discussions are for naught if they do not reflect and include actors from all parts of the globe. Thus, a first, key, observation is the need to collaborate on a further study that includes the global majority.

A second observation is to address the labelling of 'at-risk and displaced' artists: when does an artist cease to be 'displaced'? Artists themselves must be central to this discussion. Although the terminology provides a useful argumentation for specialised public and private support, does it become a stigma?

A third remark concerns the universal citing of 'collaboration and synergies' by interviewees.

This raises the questions: might more 'general' residencies be prepared to host (and support and network with) displaced artists? Might these 'general' residencies work more closely with local refugee centres (as described by at least one general residency, Unlisted Projects)?

Finally, it might be time to create or galvanise a funders affinity group, or an international advocacy initiative around this theme<sup>9</sup>. Most interviewees are especially concerned about the increasing isolationism of countries, the withdrawal of funding support for international exchange, the authoritarian drift and the known response of authoritarians to suppress artistic freedom, and while funders are also under pressure, a number of them do support at-risk artists, artistic freedom, and artists seen as human and cultural rights defenders.

Deeper discussions of values and practices between the USA and Europe could bear fruit. Europe is viewed as still having certain values (like corporate responsibility) that the USA does not have.

7 See [here](#) descriptions of the student and exchange visas available in the USA.

8 Dwyer, K., ['Who Pays for the Arts?'](#) in *Esquire* (30 September 2024).  
Also, Lanciers, B., ['Philanthropy Has the Power to Combat Isolationism'](#), in *Alliance Magazine*, 20 September 2023.  
And Shaw, H. (2025), ['The Show Can't Go On'](#), *The New Yorker*, 24 April 2025.

9 See, for example, a list of affinity groups at The Grantmanship Center, ['Grantmaker Affinity Groups'](#).

# Objectives and motivations

**Mutual enrichment.** Artists' residencies exist, after all, primarily to help artists develop artistically. Cultivating ideas, impacting social change by fostering international connections, protecting as well as welcoming diverse voices, approaches, perspectives and artistic techniques into local communities of artists and publics—all this is critical to arts organisations' missions. It was dramatically highlighted during the Covid-19 Pandemic lockdowns when artists from elsewhere were not able to be in residence; opening to others helps to 'challenge fixed echo chambers and open thinking to contemporary issues... [without which] we become smaller.' (Kala Art Institute).

**Protecting voices and sustainability.** Two organisations offering pro bono legal services, Artistic Freedom Initiative and Tamizdat, were founded by experienced immigration lawyers. Both soon developed further programmes to host artists and support their integration into the wider arts scene, to help break resettled artists' isolation while sharing information and knowledge of how to sustain their lives as artists. Sustainability was frequently mentioned, especially by the City of Asylum, Pittsburgh, whose sanctuary programme's goal is the long-term career of the hosted writers, beginning with the immediate goal of selecting a work that can be translated and brought to public attention.

**Artistic empowerment and community integration.** Artists' agency is built by connecting to local, national and international networks of artists, curators, academics, arts administrators, educators, practitioners, and researchers considered as peers. Hyde Park Art Center Residency envisions this as the beginning of a relationship that will expand over years. Organisations serving local, diverse

populations ensure that programmes linking artists and publics are free, accessible and fill the gaps in other service provision that may be too costly or unsuited to specific groups' (such as full-time caregivers) constraints. Two interviewees mentioned the success of 'twenty-four-hour residencies' for artists unable to take time off.

**Advocacy** is a natural evolution, whether providing media stories or encouraging funders to support artists forced to migrate. Tamizdat uses data to influence USA arts and immigration policies; others like Artists at Risk Connection liaise with migrant or human rights agencies to ensure artists' inclusion. Tamizdat also provides educational sessions at international professional events such as [SXSW](#) music/media/film festival in Texas, the [Edinburgh Fringe](#) or [WOMEX](#); it provides educational webinars, Q&As, and sessions for arts organisations. Artists at Risk Connection raises awareness of artistic freedom issues around the world through research, publications, podcasts, events, policy papers, and social media campaigns. Artistic Freedom Initiative's [publications](#) on artistic freedom in Hungary, Slovakia, Poland and reports on Afghan and Iranian artists are examples of their global advocacy.

**Collaboration.** Cross-sector organisations collaborating to address resettlement and professional development led to the creation of ONWARDS<sup>10</sup>, a collaborative initiative of USA civil society groups to help with fellowships, sponsorships, residencies, or other short-term arrangements after temporary placements end. While ONWARDS is limited by a lack of core funding, its members contribute to resources on the website and participate in a joint call every six weeks.

<sup>10</sup> ONWARDS arose from the US Protection Group for Cultural Rights and Human Rights Defenders. Members include the [Artistic Freedom Initiative](#), [Artists at Risk Connection](#), [ArtLords](#), [Black Mountain Institute](#), [Cartoonists Rights](#), [Cheuse Center](#), [City of Asylum Detroit](#), [City of Asylum Pittsburgh](#), [Cornell University](#), [IIE-Artist Protection Fund](#), [IIE-Scholar Rescue Fund](#), [Freedom House](#), [Harvard Scholars at Risk](#), [Ithaca City of Asylum](#), [Logan Nonfiction Center](#), [Open Society University Network](#), [Penn Cultural Heritage Center](#), [Scholars at Risk](#), [University of Iowa International Writing Program](#), and the [Urgent Action Fund](#).

**Peer-exchange and new models.** More peer training and experience sharing for hosts would be useful. ‘Practical models, blueprints or methodologies are more important now than ever’ (CEC ArtsLink). Due to the hostile

environment for incomers, alternative ideas could be discussed, such as more online residencies, bringing the artists not to the USA but to Canada or neighbouring countries, or creating exchanges for USA based artists to go abroad.

## Support and services offered to artists

**Legal aid.** The two legal assistance organisations, Tamizdat and Artistic Freedom Initiative, alongside resettlement and advocacy, offer pro bono attorneys to assist with talent-based, performance or cultural exchange visas, asylum petitions, refugee status and work authorisations. Groups and established artists can usually pay for work and performance visas. Cases requesting pro bono assistance are first assessed regarding potential success. Current USA visa instability incurs more work and time from the lawyers and fewer resolutions for the cases.

However, with increased support, legal teams could be increased, whether by external pro bono or in-house lawyers, as well as covering the many legal costs artists need to pay, such as filing fees, translation and live interpretation, and travel and living costs if they are waiting in a third country. A more fully networked system of specialised legal assistance across the USA would be useful.

**Residencies and fellowships.** City of Asylum, Pittsburgh, hosts six to seven writers at any given time and provides threatened writers and artists with a home, a stipend, legal counsel, medical benefits, and access to professional development opportunities. The immediate focus is on developing a work that can be the link to the public and professionals and serve to establish a new identity and community for the writer. As mentioned by City of Asylum, Pittsburgh, ‘Language is the identity of a writer; the loss is very deep—identity, audience, homeland—who are you then?’ City of Asylum, Pittsburgh, organises festivals, publications and creative

placemaking to place the arts and artists at the centre of community.

ARC provides Resilience Fellowships, offering six months of financial and professional support to artists in exile. Through tailored training, mentorship, and peer exchange, the programme helps artists rebuild their careers and continue their creative work in safety.

Organisations may collaborate to provide necessary elements such as housing, studios, mentors, resettlement and financial assistance, professional development and networking. [SHIM: NYC](#) (Safe Haven Incubator for Musicians) is a coalition that includes Tamizdat, the Artistic Freedom Initiative, and [Joe’s Pub at The Public Theater](#) and it is part of the larger [The New York City Artist Safe Haven Residency Program](#) (NYCASHRP). IIE Artist Protection Fund offers fellowships at partner/host institutions that include academic institutions, arts organisations, or consortia of arts organisations able to collectively provide all the elements necessary for a successful residency.

**Networking** can involve socially engaged artists who work with the ‘local community’, whether that is an artists’ community around the centre (Kala Art Institute), or people with diverse, migrant or other backgrounds living in proximity (Grand Central Art Center, Hyde Park Art Center, Unlisted Projects). The general residencies’ staff work closely with resident artists, tailoring their temporary visits to best engage and expand their research projects. This might include personal

meetings with curators and galleries, interviews with a community group, attending classes of other local artists, or shared dinners with artists.

**Training and other support.** Language training, medical, psychosocial care, and digital safety are often indirectly available via referral. Universities may provide social and medical services to resident artists. Pittsburgh however, prioritises translation, interpretation and language training as personally and professionally essential. Artists at Risk Connection offers safety training and capacity-building workshops for artists globally, based on Artists at Risk Connection's [A Safety Guide For Artists](#), available in 5 languages and prepared in collaboration with their regional representatives in Latin America, Asia and Africa.

ONWARDS offers free online [workshops and meetups](#), [resource lists](#), [videos](#) and [opportunities to connect](#) with other people in similar situations. Some webinars provide an introduction to the USA's systems and processes.

**Financial assistance and accommodation.** Artists at Risk Connection, and some human rights NGOs, provide immediate emergency grants for artists facing imminent threats, covering essential needs like legal aid, relocation, and housing. Most residencies offer a stipend, accommodation and material costs. Some residencies help artists develop financial sustainability by offering opportunities to sell work and facilitating commissions (Kala Art Institute). Some offer low-cost rent to students at affiliated universities while others focus on providing an accessible residential experience for local artists who would like to develop their artistic skills but can't afford university fees (Hyde Park Art Center). Unlisted Projects offers free studio space and paid stipends to programme participants (regardless of institutional affiliation) with a focus on artists who face financial, time or other barriers to access. Some have found legal workarounds to bridge the financial gap when a migrant artist is in between visa types. Most help artists with grant writing and making contacts that may lead

to other work. Several hosts expressed the desire to be able to pay artists, and with more funding they could do that. In five to ten years Hyde Park Art Center would like to be 'wage certified' and able to offer wages to artists.

**Promotion** is a key aspect of artists' residencies and general artists' residencies have a lot of experience at this. These residencies might be large arts centres with public programmes, galleries, performance spaces and events, or residencies with apartments and studios spaces. These spaces can host temporary exchanges, or have specified residencies for specific artists, such as parents, senior artists or new graduates. CEC ArtsLink, for example, supports follow-up activities with USA based artists, arts organisations and communities. Opportunities offered by general as well as dedicated residencies include public exhibitions, publications, open studios, concerts and art auctions, and community and youth programmes.

**Approach.** A number of interviewees specified that they had gone beyond a product/producing output model and were instead offering a more open-ended place and time for experimentation and individual artistic research. The SHIM: NYC residency is not a producing opportunity but rather an 'incubator' to facilitate connections between the resident artists and individuals, groups and organisations key to the artists' professional development. CEC ArtsLink's residencies include a long online period preceding the actual physical residency, to build trust and ensure a joint understanding of the experience.

**The ethics of care within hospitality.** Residencies would like to offer more wraparound services, such as childcare, more opportunities for low-income artists, and 'ways to demonstrate that we care for one another' (Unlisted Projects). Another residency would like to offer food or a dedicated chef as a nurturing element. One organisation would appreciate funding for mentors for the artists.



# Selection processes and considerations

**Matchmaking.** All residencies spoke of the importance of matchmaking, ensuring the artists' specificities were matched to the hosts' and that 'what this residency can offer and what the artists needs or seeks' complement each other (Hyde Park Art Centre).

**Selection processes** differ. General residencies consider the mission, location and values of the host, interest in local communities, commitment to community building and the types of artists' studios available. Excellence may not be a first priority and an aim may be for a balanced cohort of artists. Rather than an open call, some residencies are curated, or specific artists are invited. Juries can include alumni of the residency programme, curators and staff. CEC ArtsLink, as an example, gives attention to artists and arts leaders displaced from their homes or forced into exile, regardless of where they are now living.

**Danger vs quality.** Dedicated at-risk residencies usually balance the immediate persecution or danger the artist is in with the quality and type of artwork they produce. Some residencies focus on specific countries. Artistic Freedom Initiative prioritises an in-house risk and legal assessment of the artist's case and their potential to settle and work in the USA. APF looks for artists committed to progressive social change and fundamental human rights, prioritising artists still living in, or recently having fled from, their home country.

**Funding.** Unlike the European public subsidy model, the USA combines a mix of large foundations such as Mellon and Ford (although these are both changing or have changed their priorities now), small private foundations, individual donors, and some local or state grants<sup>11</sup>. In some cases a building is given by the city for a symbolic fee, allowing the arts organisation to earn money through space and apartment rentals. Some combine city and state grants (City of Berkeley, California Arts Council, City of Austin Economic Development Department, Texas Commission on the Arts) with additional university partnerships. A partnership may provide matching in-kind resources, such as housing, studio space, materials/supplies, mentoring, access to programming or classes, or immediate direct costs of the artists such as travel, stipends and other costs. Rather than institutionally sponsored, City of Asylum, Pittsburgh, is a grassroots organisation supported by individuals and private foundations, although some support is given by the Ford Foundation and Mid Atlantic Arts. The ONWARDS network is coordinated part-time by [Ithaca City of Asylum](#), which in turn is a project of the nonprofit [Center for Transformative Action](#), and is supported by Cornell University's [Scholars Under Threat Initiative](#), part of [Global Cornell](#). There may be some European funding available to organisations such as CEC ArtsLink, that operate on an international scale<sup>12</sup>. It must be said that several of these grants are of limited duration and possibly under threat due to the current government's policies.

11 Artistic Freedom Initiative cites the following: the SDK Foundation for Human Dignity, the [New York State Council on the Arts](#) with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature, the National Endowment for the Arts (previously), the [Mellon Foundation](#), the [American Muslim Fund](#), the Ford Foundation, the [David Rockefeller Fund](#), the [Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts](#), the [MOSAIC Network and Fund](#), and individual and family foundations and donors.

12 CEC ArtsLink is a partnership of CEC International Partners, the [National Endowment for the Arts](#) (previously), the [Soros Centers for the Contemporary Arts](#), and the [Trust for Mutual Understanding](#). Apart from some American family foundations and individual donors, past funders have included the [European Cultural Foundation](#), [EUNIC – European Union National Institutes for Culture](#), [Fonds Podiumkunsten](#), [Pro Helvetia – Swiss Arts Council](#) and some national arts institutes in the Nordic region.



# Challenges

## Visas and a hostile environment for migrants.

The USA government's hostile environment for migrants creates a challenging context for lawyers, due to travel bans and visa issuance obstacles. Previously approved visa applications and appointments have been cancelled, creating a climate of fear and intimidation for artists. The State Department has paused issuing USA visas globally while implementing enhanced vetting systems on social media accounts, impacting USA arts organisations' planning and flexibility. Universities have faced cuts and threats, hindering their ability to speak out.

Depending on the type of visa issued, students completing studies may have a year to look for employment opportunities and build a case with immigration authorities that they are talented enough to live in the USA. Some of the residencies support them by advising on letters and recommendations. But some visas allow artists to only work in their artistic field, which is a hardship given that many artists survive with part-time jobs in other fields.

# Funding instability

Arts funding is increasingly restricted and there are fewer opportunities, with private philanthropists not stepping up to fill the gaps. There is a rush towards philanthropy but foundations and philanthropists are also being called upon to support the diminishing funds to universities or political parties. Some key funders had stopped funding the arts post-Covid-19 Pandemic. Funders' trustees are also seen to be keeping a low profile driven by the fear of reprisals during the current government's hostile climate.

Several of the residencies have been shaken by changes and cuts at the National Endowment for the Arts. President Biden-era confirmed grants have been cancelled and several interviewees will not re-apply, to avoid compromising their communities due to the USA government's prohibition of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies and LGBTQIA+ policies.

**Competitive environment.** Some interviewees felt that funders 'funding fewer better' has resulted in a more competitive environment as there is so much to lose or gain. The USA's model of funding tends to exacerbate

competition also between funders in terms of the donor's branding.

**Political inattention.** The Trust for Mutual Understanding (TMU), whose mission focuses precisely on international exchange in the arts and environment sectors, reports that there remains relatively little funding for such direct exchanges, particularly among people in [their geographic focus](#) of Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe, the Baltic States, Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Mongolia. What little support there is—mainly governmental—is often restricted by political considerations.

## Housing and spaces: unaffordable cities.

Housing is problematic everywhere, especially in expensive cities with little affordable housing. Accommodation is crucial for residents' peace of mind and stability, especially if they're at-risk or their future is unknown. Universities and some residencies have accommodation available, while others resort to renting apartments, an additional cost. With additional funding, living, working and presentation spaces could be made available to hosts and residencies unable to offer them. Some residencies would also like to have more funds for the artists' materials.

# Success factors

Collaboration and cohorts are evidenced in the coming together of artists as well as the organisations supporting them. Addressing relocated artists' isolation, in Spring 2025, Artistic Freedom Initiative initiated the [Artists' Community Network](#), an artist-led initiative to facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, mentoring, professional development, partnership building, and artistic and networking events for the artists within Artistic Freedom Initiative's NYC-based community. The selected artists for this one-year placement receive legal aid, a stipend, and a mentor and they are connected to a professional organisation in their artistic field. All interviewees mentioned the importance of networking, peer-to-peer, or artists-led actions as fundamental in integrating an artist in the community and society of their new host country. However the initiatives that exist rely somewhat on a funder supporting the organisation that is hosting the action.

Building solidarity between artists who left a conflict zone and those who stayed is important, as there can be resentment toward those who, tending to be already more internationally networked and successful, have left. However, there is a growing sense of collaboration and mutual support which has been observed, for example, by CEC ArtsLink recently in Ukraine.

**Team capacity.** A liaison person for the artists is a key role and deserves its own support system. A liaison is a neutral position between artist and host who can 'chat to them about day-to-day issues, the very human stuff' (Tamizdat, Artistic Freedom Initiative). This is a person who notices contexts, for example if the artist's home country is in crisis or if it is flu season and the artist or their family is ill. Attempting to provide emotional, logistical and professional support to vulnerable artists can lead to burn-out in both staff and artists. Although some residencies support staff through frequent internal staff meetings, for any residencies hosting at-risk and potentially

traumatised artists professional support and staff training would be necessary. In this sense, artist-to-artist peers who have lived similar experiences can provide critical support.

**Strengths of the models.** APF's variety of potential hosts are a strength, mixing universities, arts organisations, and consortia of both or either, both small and large. Working with small arts organisations can mean more work to ensure all the required elements of the residency are covered but it avoids the bureaucracy and isolation that academia may present.

Pittsburgh's City of Asylum model prioritises developing the artists' ability to be self-sustaining, creating products that can be visible, discussed, presented, published, and performed, and which can attract public and community attention and respect (via book launches) as well as collaborations between the writers themselves. The Pittsburgh model ensures writers are part of community life. This not only fosters a new community and identity for the writers, but builds a sense of belonging for the community, the writers are recognised as neighbours. 'Making your programme important to your community is the best guarantee of long-term and increasing support and becoming public is important in order to develop multiple sources of funding' (City of Asylum, Pittsburgh).

**Artist-led initiatives.** Artist-led organisations excel at understanding artists' needs, being flexible and ensuring that the artists are quickly acclimated. Incubators or experimental or research-based residencies eschew traditional residency approaches that have set dates, expectations of concrete outcomes, and limitations that often impede the creative process. Hyde Park Art Center's approach, for example, is a legacy of the residency programme's inception by a group of artists who prioritised a network-building approach intended to 'create a career-defining moment' for both artists and those with whom they interact.

**Collaboration is a strategy** as funding pressures rise, and arts and human rights organisations realise synergies can provide more support. Resources are brought together; artists are co-hosted, co-produced, or co-presented. ONWARDS exemplifies this with a concrete

collaborative project (online training and information) that catalysed the group, although the precarity and lack of funding for coordination severely limits both the activity and ambition of the initiative. With more financial support, network coordination could be enhanced.

## Points for vigilance

**Flexibility.** Several interviews emphasised the need for flexibility in the face of constant change, whether in the political and economic environment of the USA, the availability of hosts, or in the unique journeys of each artist.

**Balancing expectations.** Residencies stressed the importance of discussing candidly, and balancing, expectations. It is necessary to be open with residents while recognising some may be suffering from trauma. The life of an artist is hard and often consists of finding other paying jobs that still allow time to create, while some

process-based residencies are too flexible for artists who have expectations of producing work. Clarity is required about what the residency can or cannot do, what resources are available, and what resources artists need to seek themselves. For residencies that begin with an online period, success means starting well in advance with online, then in-person, orientation. Sensitivities and cultural differences should be discussed. For example, race is seen differently in the USA as in some other countries or regions, and sensitivities may vary according to situations faced by the artist.

### Acknowledgements to interviewees

Alison B. Russo, Senior Director, IIE Artist Protection Fund, New York City, NY

Barbara Lanciers, Executive Director, Trust for Mutual Understanding, New York City, NY

Ellen Lake, Co-Director, Kala Art Institute, Berkeley, CA

Gracie Golden, Resettlement and Partnerships Manager, Artistic Freedom Initiative, New York City, NY

Henry Reese, Co-Founder, City of Asylum, Pittsburgh, PA

John Spiak, Director and Chief Curator, Grand Central Art Center, Santa Ana, CA

Jonathan Miller, Project Coordinator, ONWARDS (Opportunity Network for At-Risk Writers, Artists, Rights Defenders and Scholars), Ithaca, NY

Julie Trébault, Executive Director, Artists at Risk Connection, New York City, NY

Mariela Acuña, Director of Exhibitions and Residency and Gabriel Chalfin-Piney-González, Manager of Exhibitions and Residency, Hyde Park Art Center, Chicago, IL

Rachel Switlick, Artistic Liaison and Advocate for SHIM: NYC, Tamizdat, New York City, NY

Simon Dove, Executive Director, CEC ArtsLink, New York City, NY

Zac Traeger, Founder/Director, Unlisted Projects, The Museum of Human Achievement, Austin, TX

# Annex 1: Organisation profiles

## Artistic Freedom Initiative (AFI):

AFI facilitates pro bono legal and resettlement services for international artists at risk. They directly assist artists who have experienced persecution, censorship, or restrictions on their freedom of expression, and support those who have committed to advancing progressive social change and fundamental human rights.

AFI has created the one-year pilot, Artists' Community Network, split into two discipline-specific 'pods' of three artists each. The cohort artists are supported for one year with a monthly living stipend and continued pro bono immigration and resettlement support from AFI.

<https://artisticfreedominitiative.org>

## Artists at Risk Connection (ARC):

ARC defends artistic freedom and provides practical resources for artists and cultural professionals. ARC offers immediate emergency grants for artists facing imminent threats, covering essential needs like legal aid, relocation, and housing. They also help at-risk artists connect with resources and opportunities for assistance through their extensive network. ARC provides safety training and capacity-building workshops to foster connections between at-risk artists and global cultural communities.

ARC raises awareness of artistic freedom issues and the challenges faced by artists and cultural workers worldwide. They partner with academic institutions, local art organisations, and international organisations to produce research on critical issues. ARC builds coalitions with international and regional partners to elevate the voices of at-risk artists and advance policies that protect artistic freedom.

<https://artistsatriskconnection.org>

## Artist Protection Fund (APF):

APF offers fellowship grants to threatened artists from any field of practice and places them at host institutions in safe countries where they can continue their work and plan for their futures. Founded in 2015, the APF draws upon the 100-year commitment of the Institute of International Education (IIE) to protect voices and ideas globally. APF prioritises individuals still living in their home country or who have recently fled, and typically does not consider applications from individuals displaced or in exile for more than two years, or who hold citizenship or other permanent status in a second country.

The host institution provides professional and personal support to the APF Fellow during the Fellowship, including matching the APF financial support with in-kind resources like housing, studio space, materials, and access to programming and networking opportunities. Hosts vary over time, with half of the current hosts having already committed and half being new.

<https://www.iie.org/programs/artist-protection-fund/>

## CEC ArtsLink:

CEC ArtsLink advocates and supports transnational cultural mobility and collaboration, empowering artists and arts leaders to engage communities in dialogue and creative projects for a more equitable, compassionate, and sustainable world. It supports individual encounters, public events, transnational networks, and virtual platforms. Founded in 1962 to promote exchange between the Soviet Union and the USA during the Cold War, its geographical scope now encompasses Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Estonia, Georgia,

Hungary, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lebanon, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Palestine, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

ArtsLink International Fellowships offer multi-year residencies in the USA and follow-up projects to support transnational artists, curators, and arts leaders in developing community-engaged practices and creative relationships with USA-based artists, organisations, and communities. The fellowship includes an online research residency hosted by leading USA arts organisations, including those in Puerto Rico, followed by an in-person immersive residency in the USA with the potential for a follow-up project in the artists' home countries. Priority is given to artists and arts leaders whose work expands awareness, understanding, and active participation in environmental and/or social justice issues. Artists and arts leaders displaced from their homes or forced into exile are also supported.

<https://www.cecartslink.org>

## City of Asylum, Pittsburgh:

In 1993, in response to growing attacks on writers, particularly writer assassinations in Algeria, a group of writers formed the International Parliament of Writers. Governments in several European cities agreed to provide support for endangered writers in exile, known as 'Cities of Asylum'. These cities aimed to protect freedom of speech, publication, and physical safety for writers. In 1997, Salman Rushdie briefly mentioned the Cities of Asylum network in Europe during his re-emergence into public life. Diane Samuels and Henry Reese were in the audience and were drawn to this mission, working with others to expand the network in the USA.

The City of Asylum Exiled Writer and Artist Residency Program provides a long-term home, stipend, legal counsel, medical benefits, and

professional development opportunities to literary writers and artists in exile facing persecution for their work. This sanctuary enables them to continue creating while transitioning to a stable, independent life. Each writer/artist in residence has created a full-length work and continues to create. Unlike emergency relief, City of Asylum, Pittsburgh aims to help writers build a new home and life within a community. As a member of ICORN, City of Asylum, Pittsburgh responded to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by launching a Fellowship for Ukrainian writers displaced by war, enabling them to research, write, and publish despite the ongoing conflict.

<https://cityofasylum.org>

## Grand Central Art Center (GCAC):

GCAC, founded by locals, aims to create free public programming that includes all parts of Santa Ana, California. It hosts exhibitions, a resident theatre company, public events, performances, and artists' apartments for students in Cal State Fullerton's College of the Arts graduate programmes. Unlike traditional residencies with set dates and expectations, GCAC residencies focus on explorations driven by questions, supporting artists' creative processes, without set timelines. There are no open calls, but rather artists are identified and invited. Artist-in-residencies engage communities with projects that have relevance through personal connections.

<http://www.grandcentralartcenter.com>

## Hyde Park Art Center (HPAC):

HPAC is a Chicago hub for contemporary arts, providing a space for artists and the community to cultivate ideas, impact social change, and connect with new networks, and work. Its unique model offers pathways for artists to progress in their artistic practices and careers, filling gaps in

traditional models for growth and development. Exhibitions, publications, education, and training develop artists' skills, experience, and networks, enabling them to advance their practices outside traditional and often cost-prohibitive MFA programmes in Chicago.

The Jackman Goldwasser Residency at HPAC hosts 10 to 15 artists annually, fostering deep connections between their practice and the vibrant local community. The eight-week residencies emphasise cross-cultural exchange and authentic dialogue about international contemporary art practices.

<https://www.hydeparkart.org>

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### **Kala Art Institute:**

Founded in 1974, Kala is an international workshop rooted in the local community and it is a forum for ideas. Its mission is to help artists sustain their creative work through its Artist-in-Residence and Fellowship programmes. Kala supports artists and engages the community through exhibitions, public programmes, and education. It offers professional facilities for printmaking, digital media, photography, installation, sound, and performance. Education, training, community and youth programmes, studio spaces, and a public gallery are available.

Kala hosts a large-scale residency with places for over 170 artists annually. Various types of residencies, including new graduates, senior or parent artists, and local, national, and international fellowships, are available. Each residency or fellowship has different contractual conditions; some are paid while some have stipends and costs covered. Kala hosts a CEC ArtsLink resident every three or four years, providing an intense interaction with Kala and its staff. Artists can interact with the public, exhibit their work in the public gallery, and participate in artist talks or pairings with local artists.

<https://www.kala.org>

### **Tamizdat:**

Tamizdat is a non-profit organisation that promotes international artist mobility and cultural exchange. Their work includes legal aid, assistance, and a residency for at-risk musicians. Tamizdat believes that international cultural exchange is crucial for a healthy society and aims to help the international performing arts community address issues related to international borders and USA visa policies.

Tamizdat's lawyers and law students identify problems with USA government policies and procedures and create data-based recommendations for improvement. Their work provides the clearest picture of the impact of USA policies on the arts and is used by both the immigration law and performing arts communities to inform policy and advocacy.

Tamizdat offers pro bono legal assistance to international performing artists facing issues with the USA visa and immigration systems. Launched in 2017 with support from the National Endowment for the Arts, TamizdatAVAIL was made possible by the New York State Council on the Arts in 2023-2024.

Tamizdat provides educational sessions at international events and conferences, including webinars, Q&As, and sessions for arts organisations. They cover topics such as USA artist mobility, cultural exchange, diversity, and mobility advocacy. Tamizdat also hosts an email-based forum where international cultural mobility stakeholders share news, best practices, and experiences.

<https://tamizdat.org>

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### **Safe Haven Incubator for Musicians (SHIM: NYC):**

SHIM: NYC is a creative and professional residency and mentorship programme for international musicians who face persecution, censorship, threats, displacement, or dangerous situations due to their political, religious,



ethnic, sexual orientation, or gender identity. It provides legal aid, resettlement assistance, professional development, financial assistance, and other services.

The one-year residency programme is a collaboration between Artistic Freedom Initiative, Joe's Pub at The Public Theatre, and Tamizdat. SHIM: NYC is part of the larger The New York City Artist Safe Haven Residency Program (NYCASHRP), which includes Residency Unlimited and previously, Westbeth Artists Housing.

<https://tamizdat.org/shim-nyc/>

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## **The Trust for Mutual Understanding (TMU):**

Established in 1984 by Sandra Ferry Rockefeller, TMU promotes improved communication, cooperation, and respect between the USA, the Soviet Union, and Central and Eastern European countries. TMU supports exchanges in the arts and environment between professionals from the USA and 28 countries in the region: Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. TMU believes that direct, international contact and professional collaboration in the arts and environment can foster global harmony.

TMU remains committed to supporting exchanges that enable creative and talented people from different countries to freely share ideas, foster creative expression, and engage in environmental stewardship in a nonpolitical context. Grantees work in the Arts, Environment, and Arts+Environment.

In the arts, TMU supports exchanges between professional artists and designers, art managers and curators, particularly in the visual and performing arts. The grantees include choreographers, composers, directors, performers, playwrights, artists, designers, and

administrators/managers in various mediums. They also include archivists, curators, historians, researchers, and those working on cultural and language documentation. Common supported exchanges include creative collaborations, curatorial research, performances with lectures/demonstrations/workshops, historic preservation, arts management programmes, cultural documentation, and exchanges for nongovernmental arts organisations seeking capacity and stability, and network-building.

<https://www.tmuny.org>

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## **ONWARDS (Opportunity Network for At-Risk Writers, Artists, Rights Defenders, and Scholars):**

Created in autumn 2023, ONWARDS is a collaborative initiative of USA civil society groups to help people with fellowships, sponsorships, residencies, or other short-term arrangements find stability after their temporary placements end. It grew out of the US Protection Group for Cultural Rights Defenders (CRDs) and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), an informal network of organisations and institutions supporting at-risk scholars, artists, writers, journalists, and activists. ONWARDS focuses on career development for its target groups after they leave residency, fellowship, or universities stop employing them. It offers free online [workshops, meetups, resource lists, videos](#), and [opportunities to connect](#) with others in similar situations. Interested parties can [subscribe to the ONWARDS email list](#), follow on [LinkedIn](#), or join a [private LinkedIn group](#). The webinars are interactive and not archived for privacy concerns. They introduce the USA, its system, and processes. Initially concerned with career development, they now extend to migrants' rights.

<https://onwardsproject.org>



## Unlisted Projects:

Unlisted Projects, an arts and culture residency programme in Austin, Texas, supports local, national, and international artists in their practice and community, fostering connections between visiting artists and the Austin arts ecosystem. The programme aims to improve artists' socio-economic conditions, build healthy communities, and create positive international relationships with Texans.

Since 2014, Unlisted Projects has hosted international artists and leaders at the [Museum of Human Achievement](#) (MoHA). Visiting artists live and work alongside an intentional local community of 35 artists and 17 organisations. The programme provides studio/living space, a working stipend, and a public presentation. Residents attend and participate in programming, workshops, and events at MoHA. They self-select their support and the programme adapts to their needs by leveraging a strong social network. New artists receive an open arms welcome as 'the resident artist' due to the existing community's relationship to the programme and the lasting international relationships that have resulted.

Funders include the City of Austin Economic Development Department, the Texas Commission on the Arts, private foundations, and donors. MoHA provides resources and support, including assistance with funding applications.

<https://www.unlistedprojects.com>

## Annex 2: Additional organisations of interest

### **The Center on Forced Displacement (CFD) at Boston University:**

CFD fosters interdisciplinary research and engagement with the global challenge of forced displacement. They bring together multidisciplinary teams of researchers, practitioners, and artists from across schools and colleges at Boston University, around the country, and around the world.

One of their research pillars is Arts, Expression and Identities. CFD's work in this area focuses on art by and about displaced people, the expressive modes developed in displacement, the translation and circulation of narratives of displacement, and the identities and communities built by displaced people.

<https://www.bu.edu/cfd/>

### **City of Asylum at Black Mountain Institute, Las Vegas:**

City of Asylum Las Vegas was founded in 2001, the first programme of its kind in the USA. The idea of asylum cities follows calls from Salman Rushdie and Black Mountain Institute's friend and advisor Wole Soyinka for cities around the world to take in imperilled writers. A City of Asylum is a free space, unfettered by censorship or political repression, in which writers who have undergone such hardship may safely practice their craft.

City of Asylum fellows are hosted by a city or region for a period of one to two years, and receive a stipend, housing, dedicated office space, legal support, and more.

<https://blackmountaininstitute.org/city-of-asylum/>

### **New York Fund for the Arts (NYFA) Immigrant Artists Mentoring Program:**

NYFA's Immigrant Artist Mentoring Program provides foreign-born emerging artists with one-on-one career support, community, and exposure for their work. The programme has built a strong network of more than 525 immigrant artists from 76 countries and regions since it was founded.

Historically, NYFA has brought the programme to Denver, Detroit, Newark, New York City, Oakland, and San Antonio, serving artists in Visual/Multidisciplinary Art, Performing and Literary Arts, and Social Practice disciplines. This competitive programme is provided free of charge to accepted applicants.

NYFA hosts the Immigrant Artist Resources, a web page hub where immigrant artists can access resources, exchange ideas, collaborate, and amplify their voices in the American cultural landscape.

<https://www.nyfa.org/professional-development/immigrant-artist-mentoring-program/>

### **Scholars at Risk:**

Scholars at Risk is a global network dedicated to protecting scholars and promoting academic freedom. It offers temporary academic positions to scholars facing severe threats, ensuring their ideas are preserved and they can continue their work until it is safe to return home. The organisation also provides advisory services, campaigns for scholars who are imprisoned or silenced in their home countries, monitors attacks on higher education, and leads efforts to promote academic freedom and uphold university values worldwide.

<https://www.scholarsatrisk.org>



# CHAPTER 3

## A Comparative Analysis of IIE Artist Protection Fund (United States of America) and PAUSE programme (France)

by Dace Kiulina

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This text presents a comparative analysis of two key initiatives that have been pivotal in supporting at-risk and displaced artists: the Artist Protection Fund and the PAUSE programme. Both initiatives provide artists with safe havens to continue their work. Through collaboration with organisations, they offer not only financial support but also professional opportunities and tailored assistance to meet individual needs. This analysis aims to enhance the understanding of the operational dynamics of these initiatives and to inform the development of effective support mechanisms for forcibly displaced arts professionals.

## Presentation

Based in the United States of America (USA) and operating globally, the [Artist Protection Fund](#) (APF) is an initiative of the [Institute of International Education](#) (IIE), a non-profit organisation founded in 1919 to promote international exchange. Launched in 2015, the Artist Protection Fund aims to provide life-changing direct fellowship grants to artists facing threats to their safety and/or careers. The programme places these artists at host institutions and arts centres in safe countries, enabling them to continue their creative work and plan for their future.

The [PAUSE programme](#) was established in 2017 by the [French Ministry of Higher Education and Research](#) in response to the violent conflict in Syria. Initially focused on supporting scientists and researchers, the programme was developed with the involvement of several ministries, including the French [Ministry of Culture](#). Support for artists was integrated into the programme starting in 2021, through a

collaboration with the National Association of Higher Art Schools ([ANDEA](#))<sup>13</sup> and [L'Atelier des Artistes en Exil](#)<sup>14</sup>. PAUSE provides emergency support for foreign researchers, intellectuals, and artists facing threats or persecution in their home countries. Its aim is to ensure their safety, enable them to continue their professional activities in France, and offer protection and support for their families.

While **APF is privately funded**—primarily by The [Andrew W. Mellon Foundation](#) and [Ford Foundation](#)—the **PAUSE programme is hosted by the Collège de France and receives public funding from several French ministries**: the [Ministry of Higher Education and Research](#), the [Ministry of the Home Affairs](#), the [Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs](#), and the Ministry of Culture. PAUSE also benefits from support by numerous partners in the higher education, research, and cultural sectors, as well as from civil society. At present, its funding is composed of 80% public and 20% private sources.

13 ANDEA brings together 45 higher education art and design schools under the supervision of the Ministry of Culture. The institutions are represented within ANDEA by more than 230 members: teachers, students, managers, deans, heads of departments, etc., as well as associated structures that share common goals. The association promotes and develops unique pedagogical and research models that nurtures experimentation and critical thinking.

14 Founded in 2017, L'Atelier des Artistes en Exil [Agency of Artists in Exile] is a French organisation aimed at supporting artists in exile of all origins and disciplines according to their situation and needs. It offers administrative and legal advice, workspaces and puts artists in touch with French and European professionals, in order to give them the means to continue and practise their art, and to rebuild their lives.

# Objectives

The **aim of the PAUSE programme is to co-fund the stay of professional artists in exile within a cultural institution or organisation in France for a period of up to one year**, which can be renewed once. As a publicly funded initiative, the programme applies specific criteria regarding eligible host institutions, which must be officially recognised and fall under the remit of relevant French ministries. They include higher education and research institutions under the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research, private higher education institutions of general interest<sup>15</sup> or institutions under their supervision, or institutions or organisations (such as associations, art schools, cultural centres and

theatres) under the aegis of the French Ministry of Culture.

**APF works globally and its aim is to offer a comprehensive residency of up to one year** (with flexibility depending on individual circumstances) in collaboration with a wide range of host institutions, including academic institutions, cultural spaces, arts organisations and both small and large residency programmes around the world. Placements are primarily located in Western and Northern Europe, the Middle East (namely Lebanon and Jordan), as well as in Canada and the USA, where they are mainly hosted by universities.

# Target groups

**Both programmes support artists who are facing, or have recently fled from, immediate and severe threats to their lives and/or artistic practice in their home countries or countries of residence.** While the APF focuses exclusively on artists, the PAUSE programme is also open to scientists and researchers. To be eligible for PAUSE, candidates must either be forced to go into exile from their home country or have arrived in France within the past three years, as those residing in France for a longer period are generally considered to be already integrated into French society. PAUSE primarily targets established professional artists, rather than students or those with limited artistic experience. Although the path to becoming a professional artist may vary across countries (e.g. not all artists have formal academic

training), the programme assesses each applicant's professional status by reviewing their CV and portfolio. These materials should clearly demonstrate a professional trajectory, including prior work such as participation in exhibitions, residencies, or other artistic events.

**Artists from any country and from any artistic discipline/practice may apply** to both programmes. This includes visual artists, filmmakers, writers, theatre artists, performance artists, composers, musicians, choreographers, traditional artists, and more. Applicants to the APF must be at least 21 years old, while for the PAUSE programme, candidates must not be older than retirement age (65 years old). Any threat of persecution or violence due to an artist's practice, identity, or beliefs would qualify them to apply.

<sup>15</sup> Private higher education institutions of general interest (EESPIG) are private, non-profit higher education institutions in France that are recognised as serving the public good and are in a contractual relationship with the government. See more [here](#) (in French).

# Application process

In the case of APF, artists may apply directly or a third party may submit the application materials on their behalf. Applicants have to provide a complete application package, including personal information, artist statement, personal statement (statement of threat), CV or resume, two professional letters of reference from creative professionals, and two personal letters of reference from colleagues or people who are aware of their difficulties. Applications can be submitted in various languages, including English, Spanish, and Arabic. The APF subsequently translates them into English for the evaluation process. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis throughout the year.

For the PAUSE programme, artists must apply in partnership with a host institution, which is responsible for submitting the application and handling all administrative procedures. If the artist already has connections within the French artistic community, they are encouraged to reach

out directly to institutions that meet the PAUSE programme's eligibility criteria. If not, the artist can either request assistance from PAUSE by submitting a dedicated application form, or seek support from L'Atelier des artistes en exil, a partner organisation of the programme.

For the PAUSE programme the application must include the artist's portfolio, CV, and a detailed professional project with the host institution (e.g. participating in the institution's programme, leading workshops, or teaching, in the case of art schools). Applicants must also demonstrate that they are in a situation of emergency or distress due to security conditions in their country of residence and/or persecution or fear of persecution based on ethnicity, religion, political beliefs, opinions, sexual orientation, or the content of their work. Applications have to be submitted in French and applications are accepted through three calls launched per year (in January, April and September).

## Eligibility criteria

**Both programmes take into account not only the urgency and severity of the risk faced by the applicant, but also the quality of their artistic practice.** APF assess if the applicant: i) is facing or has recently fled from immediate, severe, and targeted threats to his/her life and/or artistic practice in his/her home countries or countries of residence; ii) demonstrates accomplishment and promise in their artistic practice; iii) will benefit their home and/or host communities.

APF also encourages applications from women and members of ethnic, racial, cultural, or religious minority groups, or those otherwise underrepresented in their fields. It gives priority

to individuals still living in their home country or who have recently fled.

In the case of PAUSE, artists must provide a detailed account of their situation, explaining the reasons they were forced to leave their home country or why they are currently in France. They are also assessed based on the quality of their artistic portfolio and, equally importantly, the quality and relevance of their proposed project with the host institution. Indeed, according to PAUSE, projects that ensure strong participation of the artist in the host institution's activities are more likely to enhance the artist's visibility and professional integration into the French cultural sector.

# Evaluation process

To select applicants, both programmes rely on **independent Evaluation Committees** that operate on a voluntary basis. However, as one is a public initiative and the other is privately funded, their selection processes differ slightly.

In the case of APF, all submissions undergo a rigorous internal review and background check to verify the coherence and accuracy of the information provided regarding the situation of threat, conducted by the fund's team. Once this review is completed, the applications are forwarded to the APF Selection Committee, which meets up to two times per year.

The APF has access to a global pool of experts, including academics, museum directors, curators, regional specialists, and artists. These experts volunteer their time and must demonstrate expertise in at least one primary artistic discipline, as well as general knowledge of the sector and political situation. APF equips them with up-to-date contextual information on geopolitical situations, conflicts, and risks, often provided through its network of regional advisors.

The Selection Committee is newly composed for each call and includes five to seven members, ensuring diverse perspectives. To guarantee a fair and transparent selection process, APF provides members with detailed IIE-APF Selection Committee Guidelines and evaluation criteria.

When it comes to PAUSE, the team also conducts thorough security checks on all candidates. Afterwards applications are reviewed by an Evaluation Committee composed of cultural professionals and artists who assess the quality of the portfolio and proposed project. PAUSE has a pool of experts that it mobilises depending on the type of applications receive; for instance, if the

applications are in dance, PAUSE will consult a dancer or choreographer. As a result, the experts change regularly. All experts work on a voluntary basis. The programme consistently seeks to integrate new members into the Committee in order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest. The Committee uses specific evaluation criteria and an evaluation grid provided by the programme.

Once this assessment is completed, the Direction Committee—comprising representatives from all ministries and institutions involved in the PAUSE programme—validates the final selection. While the Direction Committee generally follows the Evaluation Committee's recommendations, it may request additional verification if there are doubts about a candidate.

The PAUSE programme also has an emergency procedure for artists facing imminent danger. In such cases, the evaluation process is accelerated to approximately two weeks in order to evacuate the individual, depending on the availability of funding. Otherwise, the evaluation process takes two months.

PAUSE also offers the selected applicants the possibility to renew their stay for an additional year. To do so, they must submit a new application during one of the three annual calls, updating their portfolio and professional project with the host institution.

APF selects an average of 12 to 14 fellows each year, while PAUSE programme co-finances an average of 20 artists per year. However, this number doubled last year due to a significant increase in applications from Gaza (in 2024, the programme supported 28 Palestinian artists and 27 scientists, and 173 of their family members).



## Support offered

**APF fellowship grant is 35,000 USD and is usually disbursed directly to the selected host institution, which administers the funds to the fellow in the form of a monthly stipend.** The grant amount is standardised across all fellows, ensuring consistency and fairness.

Each grant is complemented by in-kind and/or financial support from the host institution. This support typically includes visa sponsorship (a key requirement), housing, social services, health and mental health care, language tutoring, studio space, artistic materials and supplies, as well as access to professional development programming and networking opportunities. Host institutions are encouraged to provide support that is inclusive and programmatically sound, while recognising that their capacities may vary. For instance, residency programmes and academic institutions may offer different types of resources and infrastructure. The APF allows for flexibility to accommodate this diversity.

**The PAUSE programme covers 60% of the total budget required to host the artist, while the host institution contributes the**

**remaining 40%.** The funding allocated to each artist varies depending on their specific needs and, primarily, on the host institution's financial capacity to co-fund the project. In general, PAUSE funding ranges from 20,000 EUR to 40,000 EUR. The funding is provided in the form of a salary, as the artist is officially employed—ideally under a fixed-term employment contract—by the hosting institution during the residency.

Beyond financial support, the programme, through host institutions, facilitates access to housing, assistance with administrative procedures (visas, residence permits, social security), and broader integration into French society. For administrative procedures, the PAUSE programme is in contact with the Ministry of the Home Affairs, which facilitates the visa process. Moreover, the programme offers additional funding (a maximum of 5,000 EUR) to support cultural and professional integration which may be used for French language courses, to strengthen scientific and cultural competences or to develop a career plan. PAUSE can also accommodate the artist's family, however, this support is not covered financially.

## Monitoring and evaluation

To assess the programme's effectiveness, APF has a dedicated evaluation process that gathers regular, structured feedback from both fellows and host institutions. This feedback helps identify service gaps and adapt the programme accordingly. For instance, based on early evaluations and feedback from artists and hosts, the **initial grant size was increased to better reflect the actual needs** of participating artists. Additionally, over time APF has come to recognise the critical importance of supporting artists during the arrival and adaptation period,

and adjustments have been made to improve this aspect.

APF conducts regular reporting cycles—initial, mid-term, and final reports—for itself and funders. These reports are used for internal monitoring and are not publicly available.

The PAUSE programme publishes annual activity reports that are available on its website<sup>16</sup>. At the end of the stay, both the artist and the host institution are asked to submit a report detailing

<sup>16</sup> The most recent Activity Report available (as of 30 June 2025) is from 2023. The author, however, has also had access to the 2024 report, which is expected to be published in mid 2025.

the support received from the programme, their impressions, what could be improved, what was missing, and what was successful. Programme

staff discuss this feedback in team meetings and it is used to identify areas for improvement.

## Collaboration with host institutions

The PAUSE programme staff maintain ongoing contact with both artists and host institutions, which often require support due to limited staff capacity. The PAUSE team provides guidance, resources, and tools to assist them throughout the process, such as a welcome guide and online orientation sessions to support the integration process. PAUSE also provides training for host institutions' staff to help them prepare to receive artists. For instance, they offer training on issues related to mental health, **equipping staff with tools to support individuals arriving from conflict zones**. The PAUSE team remains consistently available to provide any assistance the institutions may require. Once a host institution agrees to participate in the programme—even with limited resources—it demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting the artist throughout their stay.

As for APF, it is continuously working to expand its network of host institutions, which vary widely in size, resources, and infrastructure. Identifying the right fit for each artist can be a lengthy process, as it involves not only finding a suitable host institution but also ensuring that the available support mechanisms align with the fellow's specific needs. Sometimes, the willingness to host an artist originates from the personal initiative of an individual within the institution. However, as the decision must involve a specific department, it often requires ongoing dialogue and time to establish the appropriate conditions for hosting the artist.

Recognising that **art spaces and cultural centres often lack the resources or specific expertise**—such as navigating complex visa procedures—to provide long-term support to at-risk artists, the APF has begun establishing a consortium style

placements. These consortiums of organisations. These consortiums bring together complementary skills and capacities, enabling them to collectively offer the comprehensive support needed by the artists.

APF has also developed strong partnerships with universities, particularly in the USA, which often have infrastructure and existing systems in place due to their experience in hosting international scholars. However, supporting artists typically require additional adaptations, such as access to studio space. Additionally, when accompanied by family members, the responsibility for host institutions becomes significantly greater.

APF has also focused its efforts on partnering with academic institutions due to their capacity to support visa processes. Moreover, while the university typically serves as the main host, there is often a network of on-campus cultural spaces, exhibition venues, or interested departments that together can meet the various requirements involved in hosting an artist.

The responsibilities of host institutions are outlined in the APF Hosting Support Guidelines, which detail the requirements regarding housing, studio space, administrative support, social services, and more. Additionally, the programme provides a comprehensive Handbook to help host institutions prepare for receiving artists. Whenever possible, the APF conducts on-site visits and organises internal mid-term and final check-ins with host institutions to monitor progress, address challenges and offer support. Throughout the entire residency period, the APF remains consistently available to host institutions, offering guidance and assistance in case any challenges or difficulties arise.

# Challenges and limitations

When it comes to challenges, both programmes have mentioned their limited human and financial resources.

APF operates with a small team, which limits the scale of its operations and capacities. PAUSE programme's team is primarily dedicated to the scientific component: two staff members focus on professional integration, two manage relations with host institutions, and one is responsible for fundraising. Only one person is currently in charge of the artistic component.

Although APF is generally considered a well-funded programme, the funding is not sufficient to ensure that the artist feels financially comfortable in the host country. There is a pressing need to develop a long-term funding model that can guarantee the programme's continuity and increase its capacity to support more artists at a deeper level.

Securing sustainable funding remains a critical issue, especially in the face of shifting political climates. The rise of right-wing governments globally, including the challenges during the Trump administration second term, has already had tangible impacts on artist mobility. For instance, in 2025 the USA reinstated travel bans for certain countries, and several European governments are becoming increasingly reluctant to welcome refugees—affecting legal pathways for artists at risk.

The PAUSE programme is also constantly making an effort to secure additional funding. It aims to reverse their proportion of public/private funding in the future to become more independent and autonomous, with less reliance on public funding. The programme is developing fundraising campaigns targeting private donors as well as successfully participating in international cooperation projects funded by the European Commission; however, currently these projects

focus exclusively on scientists and researchers at risk, not artists. The objective of the team in charge of the artistic component is to develop new collaborations that could similarly lead to cooperation projects or fundraising campaigns, however, the challenge lies in finding the time, as only one person is currently working on this component.

Another challenge PAUSE is facing is maintaining its capacity to respond to the increasing number of crises. The programme has managed to mobilise additional financial resources to support artists from Ukraine and Gaza; however, these resources are not sustainable.

Responsiveness and adaptability are required not only at programme level but also at the level of host institutions, whose strong commitment must be highlighted despite often insufficient resources. Indeed, host institutions require significant support from the programme's team when hosting artists—such as assistance with administrative procedures, finding housing, strengthening their teams through additional contacts and networks, and providing necessary tools. The close collaboration between the PAUSE programme and the Ministry of the Home Affairs greatly facilitates the reception of artists and the handling of administrative procedures. Maintaining this dialogue with ministries is essential.

For both APF and PAUSE, another ongoing challenge is determining the extent and duration of support each artist requires, and how to scale that support in a realistic and productive manner. It is essential to consider what happens after the residency—whether the artist will have further opportunities to continue their work and rebuild their life and career. However, due to limited resources, the programmes are currently unable to provide structured, long-term support to artists once the residency has ended.

APF has, however, observed that many alumni have successfully transitioned to other opportunities after their fellowship. Some have gone on to join other programmes or residencies, while others have returned to their home countries—which remains one of the programme’s primary goals—when possible. Additionally, many fellows have benefited from the relationships and networks established during their time in the programme, particularly through connections with other institutions and organisations.

For PAUSE, the priority is to ensure the professional integration of artists after the programme ends. Artists are employed by the host institutions,

which guarantees their social rights, for example, the access to unemployment benefits. In 2024, over 60% of the supported scientists and artists benefited from additional funding programmes or secured temporary positions. Some even obtained permanent roles, either in academia (as lecturers, university professors, or researchers at the National Centre for Scientific Research) or in the private sector with long-term contracts. Very few artists supported by PAUSE have returned to their countries of origin (although this was the case of several Ukrainian artists who were supported through an emergency fund when the war in Ukraine started). In general, artists preferred to stay in France.

## Potential developments

APF has underlined that it is important to manage expectations and avoid overpromising. It is vital that support programmes remain transparent about the scope of what they can offer, and do not create the false hope of indefinite safety or ongoing financial support. Clear communication and realistic commitments are central to maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the programme.

Institutions must make a systematic effort to secure the necessary resources and spaces for the artists they host. Even those that have hosted artists multiple times and developed appropriate infrastructure may eventually face resource constraints and become unable to continue their consecutive support. For this reason, the programmes must continuously build relationships and adapt their approach to engage new host institutions.

Moreover, hosting artists requires a degree of flexibility from host institutions, as each artist comes from a different context and has unique needs. A positive experience with one artist does not necessarily guarantee a similarly smooth process with another. Therefore, the programmes must ensure ongoing support to

host institutions—including those with prior experience—since challenges may arise at any point in the hosting process.

There is a need to strike a balance between smaller institutions—such as galleries and cultural spaces—that may not yet be fully equipped to host an at-risk artist for an extended period but are deeply committed to the cause, and larger institutions that have the necessary systems and infrastructure in place but may eventually face resource limitations or shifting priorities regarding support for international artists. It is crucial to support the growth and capacity-building of smaller institutions so they can effectively meet the needs of the artists they host. The only path to sustainability lies in maintaining this balance between larger, well-funded host institutions and smaller, dedicated spaces that, while more limited in resources, can offer unique forms of support and valuable connections that complement those provided by larger institutions.

Another important aspect is maintaining a network of contacts across different areas of expertise—such as administrative and legal support, psychological assistance, and language instruction—that can be mobilised whenever

needed. For instance, PAUSE already collaborates with local structures supporting people in exile, such as the [Primo Levi Centre](#)<sup>17</sup>, among others. However, these networks should be expanded and strengthened in order to better meet the diverse and evolving needs of artists.

Both programmes have emphasised the importance of and the need to build a community of practice, a collaborative network of diverse initiatives and organisations that share goals but vary in approach. This would allow programmes to align, adapt, and support each other across different phases of an artist's journey (e.g., pre-fellowship, during fellowship, and post-fellowship).

Sustainability could be further explored by establishing stronger links with public institutions, other complementary support programmes, and long-term strategic partnerships.

There are multiple pathways to effectively support artists. It is important to approach this work with integrity and sustainability, ensuring that similar efforts are carried out in complementary—not competing—ways, in order to avoid overlap and maximise opportunities for artists. This also requires a deeper understanding of the diversity of artists' contexts and the need for varied programme designs.

#### Acknowledgements to interviewees

Alison B. Russo, Senior Director, Artist Protection Fund, Institute of International Education, New York City, NY  
Laureen Grant, Head of Arts and Culture, PAUSE programme, Collège de France, Paris, France

<sup>17</sup> Primo Levi Centre is a Paris-based nonprofit organisation dedicated to the care and support of survivors of torture and political violence exiled in France. The centre welcomes more than 400 people from nearly 50 different countries every year for multidisciplinary treatment. Drawing from its 30 years of experience in trauma-informed care, the Primo Levi Centre educates and trains professionals and volunteers working with exiles to promote appropriate care. It also uses this experience to regularly advocate to politicians, policy makers, and enterprises for better access to health care, to raise awareness on mental health, and ensure appropriate care for survivors of torture.

# CHAPTER 4

## A Comparative Analysis of State of the Art(ist) (Austria) and Rawabet (Europe) Programmes

By Fairooz Tamimi

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This text explores two initiatives dedicated to supporting displaced and at-risk artists: **[‘Rawabet: Participation | Connectivity | Diversity’](#)** which is implemented by **[Ettijahat – Independent Culture](#)** along with five other partners, and **[‘State of the ART\(ist\)’](#)** which is implemented by **[Ars Electronica](#)**. Both initiatives are significant in the contemporary cultural field for their interventions in support of artistic freedom, mobility, and survival under conditions of threat.

## Methodology

This study puts a special emphasis on **artistic production grants** as a key point of this analysis, and situates both initiatives within broader support ecosystems for displaced and at-risk artists.

During the course of this study, the websites, open calls and press releases of both initiatives were reviewed but the most important element was the interviews with the professionals playing a key role in those initiatives. For Rawabet, the interviewees were Ayham abou Shakra, a writer, journalist and cultural activist who is managing

Rawabet from Ettijahat’s side, and Abduljabbar Al Suhaili, a cultural practitioner, actor and Rawabet’s project producer from **[Transversal](#)**, one of the consortium members. For State of the Art(ist) the interviewees were Marita Muukkonen and Ivor Stodolsky, the co-Founders and co-Directors of **[Artists at Risk](#)** (AR), Finland who have been part of the jury of State of the Art(ist) since its launch.

Despite their shared commitment to vulnerable artistic communities, both organisations as well as their methods, frameworks, and strategic orientations diverge considerably.

## Addressing the needs of displaced Arab artists across Europe

Ettijahat – Independent Culture was founded in 2011 and operates from Brussels, Belgium and Beirut, Lebanon. Ettijahat is working to promote independent culture across the Arab world. Its main goal is to activate the role of independent artists in enabling cultural, and social change.

Rawabet, launched in 2024, was created as a response to the increasing migration of Arab artists into Europe. Recognising the gap in institutional and cultural support for these

displaced artists, Ettijahat established Rawabet as a transnational initiative that spans six European countries: France, Sweden, Germany, Norway, Belgium, and Italy. Rawabet seeks to engage artists and cultural practitioners who have arrived in Europe from the Arab region since 2015 as well as established European artists interested in collaboration and exploring the themes of the project. This is established through designing different residencies, festivals, production grants, and showcasing

opportunities organised in Germany, Norway, Corsica/France, Italy, Sweden, and Belgium between 2024 and 2026.

To develop the Rawabet programme, Ettijahat – Independent Culture conducted a series of in-depth brainstorming sessions with **displaced Arab artists across Europe**, during which a number of urgent and recurring needs emerged, revealing the complex challenges these artists face in their new environments. The discussions underscored how increased socio-political turmoil in the Arab region over the past decade has led to unprecedented migration, placing artists in unfamiliar and often unwelcoming contexts. Participants highlighted the pervasive climate of xenophobia, the rise of right-wing political rhetoric, and the scapegoating of refugees amid economic instability as major barriers to their integration and creative expression. Many spoke about the severe limitations on freedom of expression and the shrinking space for artistic and cultural contribution, which stifles the richness and diversity of their experiences.

These conditions have deeply affected their ability to collaborate with European peers, access cultural infrastructure, and engage with broader audiences, including Arab communities across Europe. The sessions made it clear that there is a pressing need for initiatives that not only provide material and legal support, but also foster visibility, mobility, and **meaningful artistic exchange**. The insights gained through these

dialogues shaped Ettijahat's understanding of the realities displaced artists face and informed the design of Rawabet as an inclusive and responsive cultural programme with a cooperative model, implemented in collaboration with a network of local organisations, including festivals and residencies.

Rawabet centres the **artistic production and the circulation of Arab artists** now living in Europe, emphasising integration, audience engagement, and cross-cultural collaboration.

Building on the insights gathered during Ettijahat's extensive needs assessment and brainstorming sessions with displaced Arab artists, the selection of Rawabet's partners was a deliberate and strategic response to the realities, aspirations, and structural gaps articulated by the artists themselves. The sessions revealed a strong demand for not only financial and logistical support but also for sustained artistic collaboration, access to audiences, and platforms that reflect the diverse practices and complex identities of migrant artists. Artists emphasised the importance of being embedded in networks that offer long-term visibility, peer exchange, and access to local cultural infrastructure. In response to these findings, Ettijahat sought out partners with complementary strengths, regional relevance, and deep engagement with both local and diasporic communities, ensuring that Rawabet could offer a holistic and responsive support structure across Europe.

## A cultural cooperation project as a response

**Gezmataz Cultural Association** (Genoa, Italy), **Masahat** – Open Spaces for Arab Culture in Exile (Oslo, Norway), Transversal Project (Malmö, Sweden), **VOCE** – Centre National de Création Musicale (Pigna, Corsica, France), and **coculture** (Berlin, Germany), with the leadership of Ettijahat, joined forces to launch Rawabet as

a transnational project which aims to facilitate accessibility between European audiences and Arab artists based in Europe. The programme aims to increase mobility and circulation and create opportunities for collaboration between Arab and European artists, especially around themes of refuge and migration.

This network of collaborations also aims to empower the role of artists, cultural workers, and institutions in Europe, and their role in activating trans-diasporic and transcultural spaces, as we continue to reflect on what diversity and solidarity mean in practice.

Each partner was chosen not only for their organisational expertise but also for their alignment with the needs articulated by the artists. Gezmataz brings to the partnership a longstanding commitment to supporting and producing musical practices. As a nonprofit organisation with deep roots in the local and international jazz scene, it offers production opportunities, training, and a prominent annual festival that fosters both the cultural and social role of music—elements that directly address the desire of displaced musicians for high-quality performance contexts and artistic recognition.

In Norway, Masahat plays a vital role in contextualising and celebrating Arab arts and knowledge within a European framework. With its annual multidisciplinary festival and its focus on literature, music, film, and performance, Masahat provides emerging and established Arab artists with meaningful public platforms and curates spaces that foster encounters between majority and minority populations in Norway. Its ability to bring Arab artistic production into dialogue with broader society responds directly to artists' expressed need for visibility and connection beyond the confines of exile.

Transversal Project brings to the Rawabet partnership a strong commitment to fostering artistic collaboration and professional growth. As part of its contribution, Transversal is collaborating closely with the Malmö City Theatre, hosting residencies that connect artists

with one of the city's most dynamic cultural institutions. In addition to providing space and support for artistic development, Transversal offers participating artists access to professional mentorship, tailored to their creative and career trajectories. This responds directly to the needs voiced by artists during Ettijahat's consultation sessions—specifically, the desire for deeper engagement with local cultural ecosystems and structured guidance to navigate and expand their artistic practices in exile.

VOCE brings decades of experience in music creation, performance, and education. Founded in 1978, VOCE works at the intersection of artistic dissemination, musicological research, and training, making it an ideal host for residencies focused on sonic experimentation, musical collaboration, and cultural mediation—areas of particular relevance to many of the musicians and composers identified in the needs assessment.

Finally, coculture in Berlin offers a unique focus on Syrian and Global South artists who face systemic barriers in accessing the European cultural scene. With a mission rooted in creative activism, community building, and the empowerment of underrepresented voices, Coculture enables artists to reclaim their narratives and reassert their agency through production, exhibition, and discourse. This partner's work directly supports artists navigating complex identity politics and precarious social positions, especially those seeking to influence their communities through artistic means.

Together, these partners form a diverse and interconnected network that mirrors the transnational realities of displaced Arab artists in Europe.

# Background of the Austrian response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine

Ars Electronica's State of the ART(ist) programme also seeks to support the work of diverse artists, although it grew out of the specific needs of Ukrainian artists fleeing conflict. Ars Electronica, is a world-renowned cultural institution and festival dedicated to exploring the intersection of art, technology, and society. Since its founding in 1979, it has become a leading platform for examining how digital innovation shapes contemporary culture through a range of activities, including its annual festival, a cutting-edge research lab, a permanent museum, and numerous collaborative projects. It is based in Linz, Austria.

State of the ART(ist) was conceived in 2022 as a direct response to Russia's war on Ukraine. It

quickly evolved into a global initiative targeting artists whose lives and practices are endangered due to political repression, conflict, climate catastrophe, or social inequality. Implemented by Ars Electronica with the support of the Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs and Creative Europe, this initiative aims to provide international visibility, recognition, and support for artists at risk.

Unlike Rawabet, which is demographically and geographically specific, State of the ART(ist) is open to individuals and collectives worldwide, **without fixed demographic or artistic boundaries**. Its emphasis lies in curatorial validation, international presentation, and strategic symbolic support.

## Support provided

At the core of both programmes are their production grants, though these function differently in scope, intent, and structure. Rawabet allocates 16 production grants valued at up to 12,000 EUR each, awarded to artists working in performance and music whose projects are to be completed between 2025 and 2026. These grants are not isolated gestures of support but are deeply embedded in a comprehensive ecosystem. Artists awarded funding, as well as other participants, participate in curated residencies, receiving **professional mentorship**, and at least four artists are guaranteed public presentation opportunities at European festivals organised in Berlin, Oslo and Genoa, every year. These presentations are central to Rawabet's mission of building audience encounters and advancing artistic circulation. In addition to the production grants,

Rawabet supports logistical needs such as travel, accommodation, and documentation, ensuring the sustainability of the projects and fostering long-term professional integration.

State of the ART(ist), on the other hand, operates a **prize-oriented model**. The main financial awards include a 6,000 EUR grand prize, two Awards of Distinction at 2,000 EUR each, and a Digital Deal Award also valued at 2,000 EUR. An additional 15 artists receive smaller presentation fees, ranging from 500 to 1,000 EUR. Though the financial amounts are modest compared to Rawabet, the **symbolic capital** they offer is substantial. Winners are featured at the Ars Electronica Festival in Linz, one of the most prestigious media art events globally. Their works are exhibited physically and digitally, archived within the Ars Electronica digital archive, and

included in festival publications. Selected artists also receive travel and accommodation support. State of the ART(ist) thus functions as a **visibility**

**platform** that provides global recognition, institutional validation, and professional networking within an elite cultural framework.

## Selection processes

The jury and advisory composition of the two programmes reflects their differing orientations. Rawabet relies on a multidisciplinary, anonymous jury composed of experts with a strong understanding of Arab artistic diasporas. This approach ensures cultural proximity and relevance, allowing evaluators to assess both artistic quality and contextual significance. The application process is multilingual, accessible in Arabic and English, with submission materials accepted in multiple languages. This inclusivity lowers access barriers and affirms the participatory ethos of Rawabet.

State of the ART(ist) utilises a rotating jury and advisory board whose members are carefully curated to align with the programme's thematic and political directions. In 2022, the jury included prominent figures embedded in geopolitical contexts of crisis, such as Björn Geldhof from Ukraine, Marita Muukkonen from Artists at Risk, and Boris Magrini with expertise in tech-art. The 2023 edition introduced new voices like Leila Nachawati Rego, who bridged digital activism and the Syrian conflict, and Lucia Pietroiusti, whose ecological curatorial lens shifted focus towards post-humanist systems. In 2024, the jury evolved further to include Kamya Ramachandran, Oyindamola Fakeye, and returning figures like Muukkonen and Stodolsky. **The advisors that year expanded to include voices from Paraguay, Nigeria, Turkey, and Iraq, with emphasis on queer, Indigenous, feminist resistance, and diasporic displacement.** This progression across three years illustrates the evolution of moving from reactive curating

to a more systemic articulation of resistance aesthetics and global solidarity.

The selected winners in both programmes reflect their respective curatorial priorities. Rawabet's 2025 winners include artists such as Bayan Rida, whose work *Je t'appelle* draws on personal narratives of Syrian migration to explore themes of memory, voice, and rupture. The selected projects are deeply grounded in the lived realities of displacement and are supported through all phases of development, from creation to presentation. In France and Sweden, Rawabet's residency programmes have enabled collaborative creation, with artists receiving mentorship, technical assistance, and opportunities for local engagement. The structure allows for iterative processes and meaningful cultural exchange.

State of the ART(ist), by contrast, presents an evolving thematic arc across its annual cohorts. The 2022 awardees included Ukrainian artists like Andriy Rachinskiy and Daniil Revkovskiy as well as Ivan Svitlychnyi, who explored memory under conflict. The 2023 laureates engaged with ecological justice and displacement. By 2024, the programme embraced speculative and technological dimensions; Nisreen Zahda employed VR to reconstruct pre-Nakba Palestine. These winners embody a trajectory from immediate crisis response to future-oriented, systemic critique. The evolution signals a deliberate curatorial shift towards envisioning artistic futures, positioning art as a tool for critical intervention.

# Challenges and opportunities met by the programmes

Both programmes face distinct challenges. Rawabet must navigate the complexities of operating across multiple national contexts, and it faces challenges such as the threat of **xenophobia, censorship, logistical obstacles and funding inconsistencies**. Its residencies, though impactful, are sometimes constrained in duration, limiting the depth of engagement. Nonetheless, the strength of Rawabet lies in its partnership-based architecture, participatory planning with artists, and alignment of resources around long-term development.

State of the ART(ist) contends with its own limitations, including the relatively **modest financial scale** of its awards and the careful communication they undertake in order to protect artists who may be placed at further risk by visibility. Its global scope necessitates sensitive communication and **anonymised protocols for certain participants**. However, the presence of a recurring jury and advisory cohort fosters continuity and depth, while the festival infrastructure provides unparalleled visibility.

Rawabet represents an incubatory ecosystem rooted in displacement and exile, foregrounding development, collaboration, and integration. It is designed to address the **systemic exclusion of Arab artists** from European cultural production by offering pathways into creation, mentorship, and public engagement. Its production grants serve as both enablers and catalysts for new

work that is intended to be shared and circulated across diverse audiences. In contrast, State of the ART(ist) operates as a cultural amplifier, rewarding projects that already demonstrate maturity and **alignment with human rights discourses**. It offers critical moments of recognition that can shift an artist's trajectory and expand their platform.

Ultimately, these two models illustrate different but equally vital interventions in support of artists at risk. Rawabet is deeply embedded, gradual, and processual, while State of the ART(ist) is symbolic, global, and reflective. Taken together, they demonstrate how art institutions can respond to the complexities of displacement and repression through mechanisms that support creation, build resilience, and advocate for justice. Their coexistence enriches the field, offering varied modalities of care, validation, and cultural resistance for artists navigating the most precarious terrains of our time.

In considering future directions, organisations supporting displaced artists may draw from both models to build hybrid frameworks. The integration of funding, residencies, exhibition, and long-term networks must be paired with attention to the safety, representation, and autonomy of the artists. As displacement and repression persist globally, these programmes exemplify the **ethics and imagination needed** to ensure that art not only survives, but transforms.

## Acknowledgements to interviewees

Ayham about Shakra, writer, journalist and cultural activist acting as Rawabet Project Manager at Ettijahat, Brussels, Belgium and Beirut, Lebanon

Abduljabbar Al Suhaili, cultural practitioner, actor acting as Rawabet Project Manager at Transversal, Malmö, Sweden

Marita Muukkonen and Ivor Stodolsky, co-Founders and co-Directors of Artists at Risk (AR), Helsinki, Finland and jury members of State of the Art(ist) at Ars Electronica, Linz, Austria

# CHAPTER 5

## Case Study: The Martin Roth- Initiative's Funding in Germany Programme (Germany)

by Franziska Stambke

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This case study closely examines the [Martin Roth-Initiative \(MRI\)](#), a German fellowship programme that supports artists and cultural actors at risk. The aim is to offer deeper insights into the initiative's operational framework, identify key challenges and opportunities as well as the potential for transferability and further expansion of the programme's model. The analysis draws on programme documents, interviews with the Head of MRI, Maik Müller, as well as reports on the initiative published by [Institut für Außenbeziehungen \(ifa\)](#) and the [Goethe-Institut](#). It also incorporates findings from the UNESCO 2005 Convention's policy monitoring platform, including the Quadrennial Reports on the Convention's implementation by EU Member States.

The joint initiative by ifa and the Goethe-Institute emerged in response to growing global concerns for artistic freedom of artists and cultural actors. Named after renowned museum director and cultural scientist Martin Roth, MRI came to life in 2017 following a collective public appeal by directors of German renowned theatres, museums and film institutions, calling on the Federal Government to set up a programme for displaced, persecuted and exiled artists<sup>18</sup>. The programme offers temporary relocation for artists at risk—either within the artist's region or in Germany—allowing recipients to continue their work and pursue professional development. This case study focuses only on the 'Temporary Relocation to Germany' programme, examining MRI's support for displaced artists who relocate there.

## Objective and goals

The objectives of MRI are rooted in its core vision for 'an open society in a peaceful world, where artists and cultural actors can act freely, and civil society actors can engage for democracy and freedom of speech'<sup>19</sup>. Within a global context where free and open spaces for artists and cultural actors to practice their work are shrinking, MRI has set itself the goal to not only help artists who live under oppressive regimes, to temporarily get out of their fragile contexts, but also provide a space where these artists can continue their artistic work and further their professional development<sup>20</sup>. A key objective of the initiative is to provide financial and professional support to the artists in such

a way that they can continue their artistic work, expand their professional artistic network and feel strengthened to return to their country of origin, if possible, or that the foundation for the next steps into the society of the host country have been laid.

The MRI programme in Germany operates through a decentralised model, awarding fellowships via hosting organisations, which are either cultural institutions or civil society organisations.

The programme aims to strengthen these organisations so they can temporarily host at-risk artists and cultural actors, who are then

18 Federal Foreign Office, Press release '[Foreign Minister Gabriel expresses support for an initiative for persecuted artists](#)', 18 September 2017.

19 Martin Roth-Initiative, [Press kit in English](#), 2024.

20 Ibid.

able to continue their artistic work safely. Beyond temporary protection in Germany, the programme also supports ongoing exchange between the artists and their communities and fosters cultural

dialogue in Germany and internationally, which is particularly relevant in an increasingly polarised political climate.

## Funding and resources

MRI is a joint project of ifa and the Goethe-Institut, funded exclusively by the Federal Foreign Office of Germany. In 2023, MRI received a total budget of 2.4 million EUR, which supported 330 fellowship holders both in Germany and abroad<sup>21</sup>.

Public funds are allocated to host organisations who manage the stipends, assist with accommodation and offer support for bureaucratic and everyday matters. MRI collaborates with over 100 cultural institutions or civil society organisations, ranging from theatres to museums, festivals, cultural centres and more<sup>22</sup>. With the flexible and needs-based funding mode, MRI is able to offer tailored support to each individual artist. The use of public funds not only ensures sustainability but also lends credibility to the initiative as a tool of Germany's cultural relations and human rights protection<sup>23</sup>. Between 2017 and 2024, MRI recorded a total of 620 supported artists, from

41 countries and from 119 host organisations<sup>24</sup>. While the total number of applications is not disclosed, it can be estimated that it is a highly selective process. For example, in a 2022 call for applications, as shared by [ARS Baltica](#), it was estimated that only around 10-15 protective stays would get funded in Germany.

Compared to the MRI funding for artists in the regions of origin, support in Germany is the most cost-intensive programme, due to higher living costs and the need for longer fellowships, which can last up to 15 months. Maik Müller explained that the longer stay in Germany—compared to 3-6 months for the funding in the regions of origin—is linked to a longer arrival period of artists, which depends on the cultural background and needs of the artist. Unlike those in other countries, German hosts usually support only one artist at a time.

## Target groups and conditions

### Artists

Funding through MRI is open to any artist or cultural practitioner worldwide, who experiences restrictions on their freedom, including

discrimination, or threats—from state actors or non-state actors—due to their political activism, or their artistic and cultural work.

21 Deutscher Bundestag, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung, [27. Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Auswärtige Kultur- und Gesellschaftspolitik für das Jahr 2023](#) [German Bundestag, Information by the Federal Government, 27<sup>th</sup> Report of the Federal Government on Foreign Cultural and Social Policy for 2023], 20/14599, 11 December 2024, page 20.

22 Martin Roth-Initiative, [Press kit in English](#), 2024.

23 Federal Foreign Office, [Third Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in and by Germany in the 2016-2019 Reporting Period](#), 2020, page 6.

24 Martin Roth-Initiative, [Press kit in English](#), 2024.

Artists must demonstrate their cultural or artistic activities in their country of origin and show the social relevance of their work, demonstrating a commitment to ‘an open society, freedom, peace and democracy through their artistic and cultural work’<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, artists must still be active in their region of origin or have only moved out recently—after the deadline of the previous MRI call for applications—or are not safe in their current country of residence. Artists also need to prove that they do not have access to a different safe country of residence (such as through dual citizenship or other residence permits). Another requirement is that the artist needs to be able to communicate in a language that enables the collaboration with the host organisation. Finally, any EU citizens or artists that have previously been funded by MRI are not eligible for funding.

In the period of 2017 to 2024, MRI artists mostly originated from Sudan, Belarus and Afghanistan (more than 50 artists per country of origin), followed by Turkey, Syria, Russia, Myanmar and Iran. Other artists who were accepted for funding came from Brazil, Egypt, Colombia, Libya, Nicaragua, Venezuela, Uruguay, Morocco, Algeria, Chad, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, South Africa, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda, Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon, Montenegro, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, China, Thailand, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The disciplines of supported artists and cultural actors were equally diverse; while artists of all artistic disciplines are welcome to apply, there was a notable dominance of visual arts (37%) among the accepted scholarship placements, followed by music and film (14% each), theatre (13%), interdisciplinary arts (11%), and literature (10%). Next to artists, cultural practitioners were also accepted into the programme for funding in Germany, including curators or cultural managers<sup>26</sup>.

## Host organisations

Eligible host organisations can be any non-profit cultural institution, artist collective or civil society organisation, including but not limited to museums, theatres, festivals or other relevant organisations in Germany with experience in public funding. The host organisation is the first point of contact during the application phase and throughout the entire duration of the project, as they are the primary link between MRI and the artist. While there is no full list of all past and current host organisations publicly available, some are featured in artist testimonies published on the MRI website, the majority of which are located in big cities, including Hamburg and Berlin<sup>27</sup>. In other cases, host organisations have publicly shared the call for applications, such as when the [Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik](#) (Z/KU) in Berlin shared the [2023 MRI call for applications](#) for funding in Germany and invited artists and cultural actors at risk to apply in a tandem.

Host organisations must be capable of integrating an artist at risk into their institutional structures and enabling them to continue their artistic practice by providing access to relevant resources, expertise, and networks. This includes managing the payment of monthly stipends, supporting the search for accommodation, and offering practical support with bureaucratic and everyday matters, such as registering with local authorities or accessing wellbeing and healthcare resources. Finally, because of the precarious situation of artists at risk coming to Germany and the fact that artists may experience severe censorship from the government in their countries of origin, the host organisation must uphold digital security in sensitive communications.

25 See the general information on the application process [here](#).

26 Martin Roth-Initiative, ‘[Portraits of current and former MRI scholarship holders and their artistic work](#)’.

27 Ibid.

# Application and selection process

## Distribution of the call for applications

The open call for applications is managed primarily by MRI, as well as by ifa and the Goethe-Institut, and is distributed via their respective websites and social media channels. The dissemination of the call is supported through existing MRI networks, alumni, and human rights organisations. Müller explained that this decentralised approach helps reach applicants in local languages through trusted intermediaries and a network of MRI alumni, thereby enhancing awareness of MRI opportunities.

## Application procedure

For security reasons applicants are encouraged to use encrypted communication services for all email contact with MRI, such as Protonmail (a free encrypted email service). Additionally, MRI advises applicants to ensure that the use of such a communication service won't lead to issues (such as suspicion or legal action) in their countries of origin. If necessary, applicants are advised to seek local advice or research online, referring to resources such as [Privacy International](#).

Applications can be submitted through the open call for applications. The application process is digital and access to the application platform is granted by MRI upon email request. When first contacting MRI, applicants should indicate whether they are a representative of a host organisation or an artist or cultural actor, and also indicate the name of their co-applicant. After this initial request, applicants will receive the login data for their personal account on the application platform. MRI also offers free online info sessions for artists (in English) and for hosts (in English and German). From the call for applications it is not clear in which language the application should be submitted, but given that one of the requirements for the tandem application is that the artist and host can communicate in a language they both

understand, it is likely that applications can be submitted in at least German and English. While there is no information available about other methods to apply, for example in the case of those with a disability, MRI encourages applicants to contact them with any additional questions about the application platform.

Host organisations can express their interest in collaborating with MRI at any time by submitting an application to join the network. If they are already aware of an artist at risk, they can also suggest an artist to be supported by MRI. If going through the open call, the application for an artist to be supported through MRI needs to be submitted by both the artist and the host, and the application will indicate their planned collaboration. On top of the digital application, the host organisation also needs to submit a legally signed and stamped copy of their application. For the application in tandem with the host organisation, the artist is required to find their own host organisation ahead of time. While MRI does not have the capacity to facilitate or mediate this matching process, Müller explains that established host organisations—particularly those with experience in regions commonly represented by MRI fellows—often have strong networks and may be able to connect new applicants with potential host institutions.

## Selection

An independent jury is appointed by a steering committee of MRI, in line with MRI's rules of procedure. This jury is responsible for reviewing and selecting the applications. It is not publicly specified whether jury members receive compensation for their work or serve on a voluntary basis. The jury typically consists of representatives from the German arts and cultural landscape, but also those involved in civil society working on issues of repression, discrimination and displacement. Jury members may also be familiar with the target groups and bring expertise in a certain cultural field or

geographical region relevant to MRI. According to Müller, this can also include people who have experience with displacement or living in exile, as well as former recipients of an MRI scholarship (when there is no conflict of interest). He further explained that the jury is composed of individuals from diverse cultural and artistic backgrounds to ensure a broad range of perspectives and to prevent bias toward popular art forms, such as film or photography.

The selection process includes an evaluation of the existing threat or risk situation for the artist or cultural actor. Furthermore, it takes into account how well the artist's and host organisation's

profiles match and it evaluates whether they fit within the mission of MRI (considering the content, quality and social relevance of their work). Of particular interest is how the artist is able to maintain bridges with their country of origin and how their active participation in their communities will continue, with the support of MRI. Müller highlighted that gender and diversity also play an important role in the selection process, in which they ensure the support for women, as well as LGBTQIA+ artists, and other marginalised and politically repressed groups of society; it is vital to consider the impact of the fellowship on the artist, not only culturally and artistically, but also socially.

## Support for artists

The funding from MRI is awarded to the host organisation, who then uses these funds to support the artist with a monthly stipend and additional financial support for personal expenses throughout their stay in Germany, which can last up to 15 months. The amount per artist is not publicly specified but it can be concluded that it is tailored to the artist's needs and the context of their stay in Germany. In the interview for this case study, Müller indicated that there are generally higher stipends for stays in cities with an expensive housing market, including Munich, Frankfurt, Berlin or Hamburg.

Next to the financial support, artists also receive individual support based on their needs, including health insurance, psychological support, language courses, and support with dealing with visa requests. This in-kind support is also provided by the host organisation, in which staff from the host organisation may accompany the artist on administrative appointments, for example.

Beyond this support, MRI also offers networking trips for fellowship holders (which can last several days), larger networking events for host organisations and fellowship holders, panel discussions, or financial consultation and specific smaller workshops on topics such as trauma-sensitive work, (digital) security, and more<sup>28</sup>. This ensures that the host organisations become well connected with a network of specialists and are also supported in developing the necessary skills to host an artist who has undergone potentially traumatic experiences in their country of origin. The protective stay in Germany allows artists to allocate time and financial resources to their mental health and reduces the pressure to focus solely on their artistic projects, as explained by a representative of the host organisation [artifact e.V.](#)<sup>29</sup>

Selected artists receive a visa that enables 'the residence, employment and integration of foreigners in Germany' for the duration of

28 Deutscher Bundestag, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung, [27. Bericht der Bundesregierung über die Auswärtige Kultur- und Gesellschaftspolitik für das Jahr 2023](#) [German Bundestag, Information by the Federal Government, 27<sup>th</sup> Report of the Federal Government on Foreign Cultural and Social Policy for 2023], 20/14599, 11 December 2024, page 20.

29 Martin Roth-Initiative, [YouTube video](#), 5 March 2024.

the scholarship with MRI<sup>30</sup>. The visa is tied to the fellowship and therefore does not require employment, only the continuation of artistic work with the support of the stipend. This particular visa also enables the mobility of artists across the European Union, which could, for example, result in performing artists being able to go on tour in the EU or film makers

traveling to big film festivals. Furthermore, the host provides professional support to the artist, including networking measures and exchange of experience with other host organisations and scholarship holders. The main role of the host is to provide a safe and supportive workspace for the artist to continue their work, develop their skills and expand their network and community.

## Monitoring and evaluation

At the end of the funding period, fellowship holders are asked to fill out a feedback questionnaire, which helps MRI to further develop and finetune the application process and the overall framework of the programme. A selection of artist testimonials on the MRI website gives deeper insights into how the scholarship has influenced their artistic work. For the host organisations, the feedback is reported through the evidence of use, which is obligatory in the two-stage funding procedure.

The marker of a successful scholarship is one in which the artist or cultural actor was able to continue their artistic work, expand their professional and artistic network, and either return to their country of origin or find a different opportunity to continue their artistic work in another country. In cases where safe return cannot be guaranteed or where the artist decides not to return, MRI may be considered a 'jump start' for artists to gain access to other residency programmes that offer similar working opportunities for artists in safe spaces.

When comparing MRI to other temporary relocation initiatives, including the [International](#)

[Cities of Refuge Network](#) (ICORN) or [Writers-in-Exile Programme](#) of the German PEN Center, MRI is distinguished by its strong institutional backing and its dual approach of supporting both artists and host organisations structurally. Operating through a decentralised network of diverse cultural institutions, MRI can offer more flexibility in terms of length, location and artistic discipline. Additionally, MRI is embedded in Germany's foreign cultural policy<sup>31</sup>, indicating the importance of this programme at the national government level.

In the third Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in and by Germany in the 2016-2019 Reporting Period, the feedback from the first fellowship holders of MRI already indicated that they felt a greater sense of security and integration in their host country and that they had expanded their creative possibilities. The cooperation with the host institutions was rated as successful, highlighting the 'sustainability-oriented nature of the protective stays and the mutual artistic and professional enrichment'<sup>32</sup>. In this way, fellows of

30 Bundesministerium der Justiz und für Verbraucherschutz, Bundesamt für Justiz, [Gesetz über den Aufenthalt, die Erwerbstätigkeit und die Integration von Ausländern im Bundesgebiet 1\) \(Aufenthaltsgesetz - AufenthG\) § 7 Aufenthaltserlaubnis](#) [Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection, Federal Office of Justice, Law on the Residence, Employment and Integration of Foreigners in the Federal Territory 1) (Residence Act - AufenthG) Section 7 Residence Permit].

31 See Deutscher Bundestag, Unterrichtung durch die Bundesregierung 26. Bericht der Bundesregierung zur Auswärtigen Kultur- und Bildungspolitik für das Jahr 2022 [German Bundestag, Information by the Federal Government, [26<sup>th</sup> Report of the Federal Government on Foreign Cultural and Education Policy for 2022](#)], 20/9845, 13 December 2023.

32 German Commission for UNESCO, [Third Quadrennial Periodic Report on the Implementation of the 2005 UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in and by Germany \(2016-2019 reporting period\)](#). UNESCO, 2020.



MRI have become ambassadors for a society that is 'committed to culture, peaceful, democratic

and cosmopolitan in both the host countries and their home countries'<sup>33</sup>.

## Challenges and limitations

### Funding and processing applications

MRI is funded by the German foreign affairs office, which comes with certain requirements for how the funds are processed. This poses bureaucratic challenges and it takes time to process artist applications. For this reason, MRI cannot act as an acute emergency programme as it has no capacity to accelerate the procedures. In severe cases, MRI is, however, able to refer artists to another relevant emergency programme. Being dependent on public funding also means that potential cuts to the budget for culture could affect the work of ifa and the Goethe-Institut, and consequently the work of MRI.

### Safety of artists

As the artists supported by MRI are all coming from fragile geopolitical contexts, their safety is a number one priority. Authoritarian regimes may be aware of MRI's work and could perceive its collaboration with artists from their countries as a political threat. This is why working with host organisations makes it easier for an artist to come to Germany, since to the outside, the artist may look like they are 'only on a cultural visit' which is not necessarily publicly linked to MRI. Given these security risks for fellowship holders, not all host organisations are publicly linked to MRI and a full list of host organisations is not made publicly available. This confidentiality also limits the extent to which certain artists and artistic disciplines are visibly represented in connection with the MRI fellowship. Nonetheless, this intentional discretion is essential to safeguarding the well-being and safety of participating artists.

Moreover, MRI may face accusations of 'interfering in the internal affairs of other countries.' Despite this, the initiative remains committed to its mission of supporting the cultural and artistic work of artists at risk. Rooted in the principles of the UN Human Rights Convention, MRI aims to uphold human rights and support individual artists fleeing repressive environments, an objective reaffirmed by Müller in a 2019 episode of the ifa podcast *Die Kulturmittler*<sup>34</sup>.

### Global political developments

One of the main challenges to the work of MRI remains the global geopolitical situation and growing dominance of right-wing populism and autocratic leaders. This affects the way MRI can plan their programme and how successful the initiative is at getting artists out of specific regions of origin. While artists from any country of origin are welcome to apply (excluding EU citizens), in some regions the geopolitical situation can make it near impossible for an artist to leave their country, which also limits the capacities of MRI to engage with these artists.

### Safe return

A common critique of the MRI, as Müller explained, is that once the protective stay in Germany ends, artists must either return to their country of origin, secure another means to remain in Germany, or seek opportunities in a different country. While it is desirable that an artist may be able to have an impact on their own community after their protective stay in Germany, a safe return cannot always be

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Ifa, Schutzprogramme für bedrohte Kulturschaffende, Podcast with Esra Kück and Maik Müller, '[Die Kulturmittler #05](#)' with Maik Müller, 28 May 2019.



guaranteed. The 2020 ifa report *Challenges of Safe Return*<sup>35</sup> explores the reasons why a safe return can be delayed or hindered, including the fact that the conditions for safety might still be unchanged and that the artist would return to the same situation. This is particularly the case for short-term scholarships. As one of the primary threats, the report names the danger for artists to be arrested by authorities upon their return. An additional barrier might be that artists may feel dependent on the host organisation and it becomes a psychological challenge to return to their country of origin.

## Experiences of artists arriving in Germany

Host organisations in Germany have reported that the responsibility of an artist at risk comes with certain challenges. In many cases, the individual comes not only from precarious contexts but may also bring traumatic experiences with them. The challenge for host organisations is to provide adequate support for the artist that goes beyond the administrative burden of hosting an artist, including access to therapy or connecting artists with networks of other diasporic artists, among others<sup>36</sup>.

# Potential development avenues

## Keep building networking spaces

In looking to recommendations for the future of MRI, it is vital to acknowledge the development of the initiative thus far. MRI has been able to support artists in Germany as well as in the regions of origin, diversify their support offers, and expand their network of partners immensely over the last 8 years. Building on the success of the last years, MRI is able to now function with a broad network of host organisations and fellowship holders, including alumni of MRI. As further diversification of support offers would be difficult due to limited budgets, a key recommendation is therefore to rely on these valuable networks and to keep bringing together artists and host organisations to learn from each other and share challenges and best practices. This is particularly vital since MRI staff is not able to accompany every individual artist on their stay in Germany, but the network of experienced host organisations and former fellowship holders provide a safe space where exchange and dialogue can happen on a local level.

## Create alternative digital spaces

An example of successful digital spaces for artists at risk was seen in the MRI programme [Residency for Ukrainian Feminist Women Artists](#), starting in October 2024, which connected feminist Ukrainian artists who either could not or did not want to leave the country to work on a common project. It was a vital project that explored feminist discourse and artist-led inquiries on topics such as resilience and the psychosocial effects of living under war. Through this residency of online workshops, discussions and expert meetings, concluding with an offline meeting in March 2025 in Germany, these artists were able to make use of the MRI network and learn from each other. As shared by Müller, the small community of 20 participants is still connected and continues to exchange and create dialogue. A recommendation here is to take the learnings from this fruitful experience and apply them to other fragile contexts where a physical relocation of artists to another country is not possible, but where these digital spaces can provide community and establish first connections.

35 Seiden, S., [The Challenges of Safe Return: Supporting Civil Society Actors After Temporary Relocation](#), ifa, 2020.

36 Martin Roth-Initiative, [YouTube video](#), 5 March 2024.

## Build capacity of host organisations

For MRI's model to be successfully replicated, building the capacity of host organisations is essential. Müller emphasised that it needs to be clearly communicated that the commitment to being a host organisation will require adjustments to their usual work. This may include hiring more staff who are able to accompany the MRI funded artists when dealing with the authorities, or training for staff to be able to handle the additional needs of an artist who may have had traumatic experiences such as living in a war-zone, or having been imprisoned for their art. Host organisations must develop the necessary expertise to provide meaningful, sensitive, and sustained support.

Additionally, the 2022 MRI-commissioned report *An Exercise in Sitting with Discomfort*<sup>37</sup> explores the lived experiences of artists from the Global South relocating to the Global North, including to Germany. The report drew insights from artists supported by MRI as well as those supported by ICORN. Drawing on testimonies from MRI and ICORN fellows, the report highlighted barriers, such as everyday racism, difficulties securing housing, or navigating bureaucracy. In some cases, discrimination even came from host institution staff. Although there is growing awareness of power imbalances, the report noted that formal mechanisms to address them are still lacking. Its recommendations call for a holistic approach to equity and inclusion, grounded in four pillars: individual engagement, interpersonal relationships, institutional practices, and resource allocation.

### Acknowledgements to interviewee

Maik Müller, Head of the Martin Roth-Initiative, Berlin, Germany

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37 Yazaji, R. and Schmidt, M., [An Exercise in Sitting with Discomfort: Towards more equitable support for international relocation in North-South contexts](#). Martin Roth-Initiative and ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen), 2022.

# CHAPTER 6

## Case Study: Prince Claus Fund's Artist Urgency Fund (The Netherlands)

by Rana Yazaji

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The [Prince Claus Fund](#) is an independent foundation based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, dedicated to supporting artists in ‘regions where culture is under pressure’ (as stated in their mission). The newly established Urgency Fund aims to assist artists in 141 countries in the Global South, focusing specifically on those who have previously received Seed Awards or Fellows Awards from the foundation.

The pilot of the Urgency Fund will be officially launched in September 2025, backed by a 1.5 million EUR contribution from the National Postcode Lottery which will be distributed over three years. The Programme is designed as a safety net for Prince Claus Fund-awarded artists, ensuring they can trust that urgent support will be available to them when needed.

The primary objective of this programme is to ensure the professional continuity and growth of artists working under extremely challenging conditions, such as war, natural disasters, and oppression. As such, the concept of ‘urgency’ is central to the programme’s design. In this context, urgency refers both to time-sensitive situations requiring rapid intervention and to disruptions that threaten the ongoing practice of the artists.

## Positioning the Prince Claus Fund: responding to urgency

While urgency programmes—and, more widely, emergency support—have not traditionally been a primary focus of the Prince Claus Fund, the creation of this programme responds to a growing need among the fund’s awardees. Many artists supported by the Fund face urgent challenges arising from diverse and shifting geopolitical contexts.

For the Prince Claus Fund, providing urgent support is a targeted effort to address the immediate needs of its awardees, complementing its broader mission to support culture under pressure. The Urgency Fund is designed to help

artists in the Global South maintain their presence and prominence in the art sector, ensuring they are not pushed out by crises and can continue to develop as artists and cultural workers in their fields.

The Urgency Fund prioritises immediate relief through rapid intervention, while also planning for additional support via recovery funding and, in highly exceptional situations, temporary relocation assistance. This approach ensures both immediate and sustained support for artists facing acute challenges.

# Target groups and conditions

As highlighted above, the fund is available exclusively to Prince Claus Fund Awardees in the Global South who are experiencing immediate pressure and require specific support to sustain

their artistic practices. In this pilot phase, the focus will be on awardees from 2021 to the present, encompassing approximately 600 artists.

## Nature of support

The support is structured into two main: Relief Fund and Recovery Fund (Fertile Ground).

### Relief Fund

The Relief Fund tier provides immediate, small-scale funding of 500–2,500 EUR per applicant. Through this grant the artists are entitled to use the funds in the best way to deal with the urgent situation they face. This openness in utilising the fund is another approach to the much needed ‘tailored’ support in urgent situations, but here it is tailored by the artists individually rather than the foundation.

### Recovery Fund

Through the Fertile Ground mechanism, the Recovery Fund offers a ‘recharge’ grant to recipients of the Relief Fund, enabling them to benefit from a temporary art residency.

Fertile Ground is an ongoing programme that supports Seed Awardees by fostering strong connections with organisations within their respective art ecosystems. Through this initiative, the Prince Claus Fund contributes to the sustainability of these organisations while empowering artists to participate in residencies, workshops, and other developmental activities. This established network of host organisations will be mobilised to provide recovery spaces for artists facing urgent challenges.

The Recovery Fund is also accessible to those who did not apply for the Relief Fund, though a prioritisation process is in place to ensure support is directed where it is most needed. Importantly, artists benefiting from the Recovery Fund are not expected to be immediately productive; these residencies are intended as spaces for rest, reflection, and regaining the capacity to continue their artistic practice.

The Fund is currently studying the potential to support the relocation of artists facing high-risk situations at a later stage of the pilot. In this development phase, and potentially in collaboration with specialised organisations, relocation is being considered only as a last-resort option, to be applied in exceptional and highly urgent cases.

As the foundation supports artists across the Global South—a term that encompasses highly diverse geopolitical and cultural contexts—the Urgency Fund requires Prince Claus to adopt prioritising positions on developments in specific regions. This pushes the foundation toward a more advocacy-oriented approach and necessitates prioritisation mechanisms. The programme will require focused strategies for certain regions based on their unique circumstances or political developments, for this, ongoing internal discussions will shape how these approaches evolve.

# Application and selection process

Eligible artists are those who previously received Prince Claus Fund's [SEED Award](#) or [FELLOWS Award](#). Artists should be from, living, and working in eligible countries across Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.

Core to the application and selection processes for the Urgency Fund is the concept of trust-based funding, which is a core principle followed by the Prince Claus Fund. Trust-based funding, as practiced by Prince Claus, is an approach that centers on the autonomy and expertise of artists and cultural practitioners. The Fund believes that those working in their own contexts best understand their needs and challenges. Therefore, all financial support is provided without restrictions or prescriptions on how it should be spent, and payments are made upfront rather than being dependent on reporting or budgets. Recipients are free to invest the funding in any way they believe will most effectively support their professional growth and impact, whether that's purchasing equipment, covering living expenses, or investing in new projects. This model gives artists space and freedom in their practices. Building on the same concept and expanding it, there is no extensive process of case verification, which illustrates that trust-based funding is not merely a concept related to budgets allocation, but rather it is a relationship built on trust between the donor institution and the artist.

Awardees will need to access a simple application form. The online form, which is only available in English, is exclusively accessible to previous awardees through their accounts. The aim is to respond positively to every eligible request. The call remains open throughout the year, with applications reviewed on a rolling basis every two weeks. Once the allocated budget for a given quarter is exhausted, the call will be temporarily closed until the start of the next quarter. While the fund strives to support all eligible applicants, prioritisation may shift according to the urgency

and severity of each case. For example, a request involving the loss or damage of a musical instrument may be deprioritised in favour of applicants facing more critical or high-risk circumstances.

A structured scoring system ensures fair prioritisation based on the following two main criteria:

**1. Impact severity:** using an impact severity scale from 1 to 5, this criterion evaluates the extent to which the reported situation affects the artist's capacity to sustain their artistic practice, based on the information submitted.

**2. Urgency scale:** using an urgency scale from 1 to 5, each application is assessed for time sensitivity and is placed on a scale indicating how urgently support is needed. Support may be granted immediately or, depending on the urgency relative to other cases, postponed for up to three months. Applications that are deferred three times will automatically become ineligible for further consideration and will be declined.

Each application is assessed by an independent international expert, who provides a graded evaluation along with qualitative feedback focusing on assessing the urgency of the situation and its impact on the continuity of art practices of the concerned artist. Based on the recommendations of the external experts, the Programmes Team Selection Committee makes the final prioritisation. Important to notice, that experts will be selected based on their expertise and knowledge in most of the concerned regions. Their contribution through assessment and recommendation will be compensated.

The application form asks applicants to identify if their situation is life threatening or high risk. If this is the case, artists can not apply for the relief fund, as more specialised organisations are more equipped and experienced for such situations.

## Challenges and limitations

As in many other contexts, funding for arts and culture in the Netherlands has faced significant cuts. The Prince Claus Fund has been directly affected by these reductions, resulting in the loss of several staff members and a necessary reorganisation of work. Currently, just 12 people are responsible for managing all the activities of the foundation.

The foundation has a strong focus on supporting Seed Award artists, who often face the greatest challenges and are at higher risk of dropping out of the art sector.. However, this commitment brings its own set of challenges; the foundation must continuously adapt to categorise and respond effectively to the diverse and complex difficulties experienced by its artists, ensuring that support is both timely and relevant.

The fund does not claim that it has the capacity to solve the problems faced by artists, or to be their saviors raising unrealistic expectations, rather it seeks to assist them find the space to overcome their challenges.

Cooperation with specialised organisations is a priority of the Prince Claus Fund, enabling them to implement the second component (artist residencies programme) and in highly exceptional cases facilitate a temporary relocation. This imposes a challenge connected to employment regulations (such as having access to work permits) and funding restrictions that institutions worldwide are dealing with. Relocation of artists does not fall within the working remit of the Prince Claus Fund that is subsidised by the [Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) to fulfil its mission supporting artists in their home countries.

## Monitoring and evaluation

While this case study was being written, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, metrics, and methods were still under development. One key indicator will be whether artists have been able to overcome the challenges that prompted their requests for support and continue their artistic practices. Residencies will also be evaluated to determine if they fulfill their purpose as recharging spaces for artists under pressure, including consideration of participants' mental well-being.

The current plan includes conducting interviews twice a year with a selected group of supported artists. Additionally, a smaller cohort will participate in a three-year assessment process, an approach already used in Fellowships to inform the impact report. Each year, reflection sessions are held with twelve artists, from which a subset is selected for ongoing accompaniment for up to three years.



# Supporting artists in their regions

Prince Claus Fund's Urgency Fund is situated within an approach of supporting at-risk artists to stay in their countries or at least in the proximate region. There are other frameworks that fit into this category including the [Funding in the regions of origin provided by the Martin Roth-Initiative](#), which serves as a parallel system to their temporary relocation to Germany programme.

Martin Roth-Initiative supports artists to face the challenges in their context through different mechanisms, including funding a host organisation in one of the neighbouring countries to temporarily host at-risk artists, or providing direct financial support to artists to independently travel to a place they consider safer for a period up to three months without directly arranging a host organisation for them.

Other examples stem from the Global South taking a responsive, reactionary and temporary nature to natural disasters, wars and genocides. Following the devastating earthquakes in February 2023 in Northern Syria and Southern Turkey, [Action for Hope](#), in partnership with [Ettijahat - Independent Culture](#), initiated the [Ahliyah Initiative](#) to meet the urgent and long-term needs of the affected communities. Officially announced on 6 March 2023, the initiative was founded on strategic partnerships with grassroots and local civil society organisations, facilitating direct, community-led implementation of cultural and psychosocial support programmes on the ground.

By collaborating with groups such as [Douzan Art & Culture](#) in Gaziantep, the [Hurras Network](#) in Ma'arrat Misrin and Idlib, [Hooz Centre](#) in Azaz, Nabid for Relief in the Idlib countryside and Jindires, and [Ashna for Development](#) in

North and Northeast Syria, the initiative reached over 7,000 individuals between March and August 2023. Activities included psychosocial and cultural programming, as well as capacity-building workshops in Turkey and Lebanon, providing local practitioners with the tools to continue their work amidst ongoing crises. The Ahliyah Initiative serves as a compelling example of how culture and community engagement can promote resilience and healing in the aftermath of a disaster.

In 2024, Action for Hope and Ettijahat-Independent Culture partnered again with a network of organisations both within and outside Palestine to launch the [Gaza Emergency Response](#) to support artists and cultural institutions amidst the ongoing crisis. The initiative provided small grants averaging 1,000 EUR to 74 individual artists and 10,000 EUR each to eight cultural organisations, including [Mayasem for Culture and Arts](#), [Basma Society for Culture and Arts](#), and the [Future Association for Development and Environment](#). These funds supported a range of urgent activities, such as psychosocial support sessions for women and children, puppet theatre performances, the distribution of food parcels and hygiene kits, and therapeutic recreational programmes for individuals with disabilities<sup>38</sup>.

In response to the October 2024 attacks on Lebanon that displaced over a million people, Action for Hope, in collaboration with Ettijahat - Independent Culture, launched the [Ahliyah Relief Initiative](#) to provide urgent cultural and humanitarian support to affected artists, families, and communities. The programme delivered small grants ranging from 800 EUR to 2,400 EUR to 132 former beneficiaries of Action for Hope and awarded 10,000 EUR each to three

38 Action for Hope later provided an additional top-up grant of 6,800 EUR to each of the eight partner organisations. These included the Independent Living Association, Atfaluna Society for Deaf Children, Future Association for Development and Environment, Juoor for Health and Social Development, Sharek Youth Forum, and Unlimited Friends Association for Social Development.

frontline organisations—[Ahla Fawda](#), [Women Now for Development](#), and [Endless Medical Advantage](#)—to provide immediate aid in the Bekaa and Beirut<sup>39</sup>.

These initiatives illustrate the significant effect of targeted cultural and psychosocial support during times of crisis. Such examples highlight the importance of a collective commitment to maintaining artistic practices in the face of adversity. They also show the value of support schemes that aid artists in their home regions

through temporary relocation and direct financial assistance.

The new programme by the Prince Claus Fund represents a vital effort to assist artists confronting immediate and severe challenges. It guarantees that artists receive prompt help as well as opportunities for long-term recovery. Through trust-based funding and strategic partnerships, the Urgency Fund not only meets immediate needs but also promotes continuity within the global arts community.

#### Acknowledgements to interviewee

Mohamad Dib, Programmes Manager, Prince Claus Fund (Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

39 By 2025, these efforts had expanded significantly: Ahla Fawda reached 1,950 families through its EcoHub, distributing over 48,000 meals and offering emergency shelter; Endless Medical Advantage provided 355 mattresses and blankets, psychosocial support to more than 1,487 individuals, and cardiology consultations to 100 displaced patients; and Women Now funded school tuition for 42 children, supported 33 displaced women and girls through psychosocial sessions, delivered baby formula and nappies to 60 families, and offered food assistance to 700 refugees.

# Annex: Internal Assessment Form of the Prince Claus Fund's Artist Urgency Fund

Each reviewer will assess the application using both the Impact Severity Scale and the Urgency Scale. Only applications with a combined score of 5 or higher will be considered for support. Within each selection round, applications with the highest scores will be prioritised for funding until the budget limit for that round is reached. The remaining positive applications will be deferred based on their urgency scale.

## 1. Impact Severity Scale (1–5)

Assesses the degree to which the applicant's artistic practice is being disrupted, while doing so, please consider the applicant's respective location and its actualities. Please score the impact of the situation the applicant is facing and provide your written assessment of it up to 300 words.

- 1: Minimal Impact: The situation has little to no effect on the artist's practice.
- 2: Mild Impact: Some disruptions are noted, but the artist can largely continue their work.
- 3: Moderate Impact: Clear disruptions are present; the artist's practice is partially impeded.
- 4: Significant Impact: The artist is unable to continue their practice without intervention.
- 5: Critical Impact: The situation has brought the artist's practice to a complete halt or caused severe professional or personal consequences. If the artist is directly at Risk please flag the application immediately.

Guiding Questions for Reviewers:

To what extent has the artist's ability to create, present, or sustain their work been affected? Are the impacts described structural, or

circumstantial? Is the disruption ongoing or expected to worsen without support?

## 2. Urgency Scale (1–5)

Assesses how time-sensitive the situation is in relation to other cases.

- 1: Can be deferred (>2 months): No immediate action required; support can wait.
- 2: Low urgency (1–2 months): Some time sensitivity; no severe risk in short-term delay.
- 3: Moderate urgency (<1 month): Timely support is important to avoid worsening impact.
- 4: High urgency (within 2 weeks): Delay will significantly worsen the situation.
- 5: Immediate (crisis-level): Requires immediate intervention to prevent severe harm or irreversible damage to the practice. If that is the case please flag the application immediately.

Guiding Questions for Reviewers:

Will the absence of immediate support cause further deterioration? Can the challenge be reasonably wait or be mitigated without immediate assistance?

# CHAPTER 7

## From Hospitality to Responsibility: Professional Development for At-risk and Displaced Arts Workers

by Milica Ilić

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This text examines the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists and art workers through the lens of support structures. Like other contributions in this volume, it is grounded in sectoral experience, drawing on the perspectives of individuals and organisations with a sustained record of providing support, as well as those shaping professional development conversations within the arts sector. While the voices of displaced artists are central to understanding their needs, those of the institutions providing hospitality offer essential insights into what makes support effective, sustainable, and equitable. This analysis reflects the observations, concerns, and understanding of the challenges and needs involved from those who play a crucial role in hospitality processes.

The professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists is inseparable from the capacity of institutions to host them meaningfully. It requires strengthening the competences and overall capacities of hosting organisations, including raising awareness of the barriers imposed by administrative systems and by dominant institutional models and practices, particularly those affecting artists from marginalised backgrounds. By combining practice-based insights with structural reflection, the text below aims to inform immediate actions and inspire further development of tools and practices.

## Methodology

This article is based on group conversations conducted online in June 2025, with a small group of individuals and representatives of organisations involved in supporting the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists and art workers in Europe. Participants were selected with attention to the diversity of organisations, approaches, and the relevance of their track record. In addition, the text was informed by discussions that took place at a closed meeting ‘Reimagining Hospitality’ held in the same period in Paris, France, co-organised by [Cité internationale des arts de Paris](#) and [DutchCulture, On the Move, Fresh Arts Coalition Europe](#) (FACE), and [Artists at Risk Connection](#) (ARC). These open, loosely structured, and facilitated discussions created a space for participants to share experiences, insights, and reflections. The author subsequently gathered and analysed the ideas expressed, identifying recurring concerns, challenges and suggestions.

This article privileges practice-based and lived organisational knowledge over academic or policy frameworks. It offers neither an objective overview nor an exhaustive mapping of the field. Instead, it provides a subjective snapshot of current thinking among a select group of professionals engaged in supporting the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists. Interlocutors were invited to speak from their personal and organisational perspectives, sharing observations, concerns, and insights shaped by their specific contexts.

As with any conversation-based process, the range of voices included is necessarily partial, and certain perspectives are undoubtedly missing. Time and availability constraints meant it was not possible to include all relevant actors. Nonetheless, this article aims to offer a valuable lens into current thinking within the field and encourages further research, dialogue and knowledge exchange.

While the conversations centred on the professional development of at-risk and displaced artists and art workers in Europe, participants consistently emphasised the importance of

situating this issue within a broader transnational and systemic perspective that recognises the global dynamics shaping mobility, access and equity in the arts.

## Reframing the question

This investigation began with the intention of examining how at-risk and forcibly displaced artists are supported in integrating into the professional arts sector in Europe, through training, language support, networks, and opportunities for artistic development. It focused on the perspectives of individuals and organisations with experience in providing such support. Yet, as the conversations unfolded, it became clear that professional development cannot be considered in isolation; it is inseparable from the structural conditions that define the cultural field as a whole.

What often appear as individual needs—access to work, visibility, mentorship, or peer exchange—are shaped by systemic barriers, such as unequal access to funding, restricted mobility, linguistic and bureaucratic hurdles, and **the continued dominance of Western-centric standards of artistic value**. For displaced artists, these challenges are intensified by legal precarity, trauma, and limited access to local infrastructure and knowledge.

Professional development must therefore be understood not only as a personal journey, but it must also take into consideration the structural issues in the sector as a whole. Supporting artists at risk means rethinking the systems that exclude or instrumentalise them, and critically examining how institutions may—consciously or not—reproduce hierarchies through their norms, cultures, and funding mechanisms.

Language and terminology emerged as central concerns in these discussions. Words like *integration*, *inclusion*, *hosting*, and *hospitality* carry embedded assumptions about power, belonging, and legitimacy. Interrogating and reimagining these terms became a vital thread in the conversations, shaping the reflections and recommendations that follow, grounded in the lived realities of those most actively engaged in this work.

## Financial infrastructure that supports both artists and hosts

A strong financial foundation is essential for providing meaningful support. Existing practices demonstrate that the professional development of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists cannot

take place without targeted, flexible, and sustained financial investment, both for the artists themselves and for the organisations that host them.

Yet the issue is not just the availability of funding, but how it is structured to meet the realities of this work. As Bojana Panevska of DutchCulture and [TransArtists](#) notes, many smaller or grassroots initiatives are leading the way in developing sensitive, artist-centred responses. Yet these organisations frequently work with limited resources and staff, and often cannot provide sustained or long-term support. The disparity in scale and capacity between institutions creates a fragmented landscape, where coordinated action becomes difficult. Clymene Christoforou of [D6: Culture in Transit](#), explains: ‘We fall into this space where we don’t want to become *not* about the art, and we don’t want to become *just* about the art, but we walk in a difficult space for the funding that’s available in this country.’

A revised funding architecture could help bridge these gaps, supporting partnerships between organisations of different sizes and enabling more cohesive responses, adapted to the specific needs of the artists and the organisations supporting them.

**Additionally, project-based funding often creates organisational precarity**, limiting the capacity to engage meaningfully over time. Structural or core funding is therefore crucial. In Finland, [Globe Art Point](#) has invested years in building trust with the Ministry of Education and Culture, demonstrating the unique value of their work and its relevance for the sector. As a result, they have secured more stable funding because the Ministry ‘learned about us and learned about our work.’ This institutional stability, as they note, allows them to expand and deepen their activities through projects, while keeping a safe core structure.

Short-term mechanisms like artist residencies or emergency relocation grants provide necessary relief, but more robust models go further. These approaches integrate continuous financial support into broader developmental frameworks, enabling artists to engage in long-term professional trajectories rather than isolated opportunities. For instance, the [Warsaw Observatory of Culture](#) developed a residency programme that combined financial support with structured mentorship and tailored introductions to the Polish arts sector, as described by Anna Galas-Kosil of the [Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute](#). Several interlocutors highlighted that **small-scale, low-cost interventions**—such as covering meals, transportation, childcare, or organising informal gatherings—are highly effective in fostering a sense of community and belonging. Yet such costs are often ineligible under conventional funding rules. Budgets that include room for these ‘invisible’ but vital forms of care can significantly strengthen the quality and impact of hosting.

In short, effective financial infrastructure is not only about the availability of funding, but about how it is framed, allocated, and sustained. The most promising support models are those that treat hospitality not as a short-term intervention, but as a structural commitment, one that recognises **time, trust, and care as essential components of professional development**. These approaches offer valuable insights for replication and scaling across the sector.

## Community is the infrastructure

Support for at-risk and forcibly displaced artists cannot focus solely on individual career development, it must also address the collective

and relational dimensions of artistic practice. A recurring theme across conversations was the **importance of building and sustaining a sense**



**of community and belonging.** While access to networks, funding, and opportunities is essential, it is often the feeling of connection—to a place and to peers—that enables artists to create, remain, and grow.

Community-building is especially critical for artists who arrive without existing networks or familiarity with the local cultural ecosystem. As Clymene Christoforou put it, displaced artists are often perceived as perpetually ‘emerging,’ forced to start over despite their established careers: **‘This idea that you are constantly an emerging artist if you are a displaced artist, that you have to redo it all again.’** In this context, moments of encounter, familiarity, and shared experience are not peripheral; they are fundamental conditions for meaningful engagement.

In practice, community-building can take many forms, from long-term residencies with embedded peer support to informal gatherings designed to create low-pressure spaces for connection. [Immart](#), a Danish organisation working to support culturally and linguistically diverse artists, sees the creation of social networks as central to its mission. As founder, Nicol Savinetti explains, the shared dinners they organise with foreign-born artists have been hugely successful as ‘a vehicle to create togetherness.’ Similarly, Clymene Christoforou described how shared meals or visits to local heritage sites are **simple but powerful gestures that nurture trust and solidarity.** These actions can be critical to building a sense of belonging.

Support schemes that prioritise community-building offer essential spaces for trust, exchange, and informal learning—forms of knowledge rarely accessible through official channels. Many support structures have networking and community aspects built into their DNA. For example, Alex Kollerová explains how Globe Art Point fosters connectivity as part of its core

mission: ‘We are a great community, so we produce a lot of networking opportunities where people can meet.’

Another strong example is the [City of Sanctuary](#) movement in the United Kingdom. Driven by local communities and organisations, it provides a flexible framework for cities to become welcoming and safe spaces for refugees and asylum seekers. While it does not provide funding or legal aid, it fosters a culture of hospitality and inclusion, empowering communities to actively support those fleeing persecution or violence.

Crucially, community-building does not mean centring displacement as a singular or defining identity. As mentioned by Belarusian cultural manager, activist and performer Bahdan Khmialnitski at the 2025 edition of On the Move’s Cultural Mobility Forum in Riga, Latvia<sup>40</sup>, finding community within the LGBTQIA+ cultural scene was just as vital as being recognised through their national or displacement identity. **Support mechanisms that allow for multiple pathways of belonging give artists the freedom to define their place on their own terms.**

Community-building must also extend to the organisations doing the hosting. Partnerships, shared tools, and mutual learning strengthen the wider ecosystem and help prevent burnout or duplication. In this spirit, for the past three years the [Flanders Arts Institute / Kunstenpunt](#) holds regular open online meetings ‘[Art During Crisis](#)’ (first weekly, now monthly), where forcibly displaced artists, support organisations, and other professionals come together. As Dirk De Wit of Kunstenpunt described, these calls are ‘an open learning process’ that has strengthened both the sector’s capacity to engage with hosting issues and Kunstenpunt’s own institutional response.

Likewise, a [Sanctuary and Culture Network](#) was created in Newcastle, United Kingdom

40 Resources from the Cultural Mobility Forum 2025 are available on [On the Move website](#), including audio-visual recordings and blog-articles.

to bring together organisations working with displaced artists and communities, fostering knowledge-sharing and collaboration. Meanwhile, DutchCulture and Kunstenpunt implemented the Future Hospitalities programme to promote peer learning and capacity-building among hosting organisations. Nicol Savinetti also pointed to the [Displaced Artists Network](#) in Denmark, which initially focused on Ukrainian artists but is now expanding its scope and partnerships. In Poland, the informal network REACT was founded by around 40 diverse Polish organisations to support working conditions in the multicultural environment, as a response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the arrival of forcibly displaced artists from Ukraine and Belarus.

The ‘Reimagining Hospitality’ meeting held in Paris in June 2025, gathered various support structures from Europe and the United States of America and emphasised the urgent need for a network of support structures, not only to facilitate peer learning but also to counter the institutional silence surrounding the situation of at-risk and displaced artists. **These ecosystems of support are not always visible from the outside, but they form the backbone of a truly hospitable environment.** Community building is not a soft add-on to professional development, it is part of the infrastructure that makes it possible. Where systems are rigid, extractive, or fragmented, artists are left to navigate alone. Where there is community, there is continuity, care, and the possibility of imagining a future.

## Artist-led, flexible and responsive approaches

The conversations held during this research consistently highlighted the need for support systems that are artist-led, flexible in design, and responsive to the evolving realities of artists’ lives and practices. This means moving beyond predefined opportunities and toward frameworks where artists help shape the terms of engagement.

**Displaced artists are too often viewed as passive recipients of aid rather than active agents shaping cultural life.** As Clymene Christoforou noted: ‘We just have to leave those spaces for where the artists arrive, at what point they’ve arrived from. And if they’ve arrived from a professional practice, then we have to say: you’re a professional.’ Starting from the premise of affirming existing expertise helps avoid the common trap of placing displaced artists in a perpetual state of emergence or dependency.

Support organisations, however, often operate within administrative and legal constraints. For instance, Globe Art Point works with refugee and

asylum-seeking artists in Finland but cannot fully engage with them until they have the right to work. In other cases, organisations are mandated to work only with artists who meet **certain definitions of ‘professionalism’, often rooted in Western-centric frameworks**, such as academic credentials or institutional recognition. As Dirk De Wit argued, we must ‘step out of the existing criteria of what is professional and what is not—maybe you don’t have a diploma, maybe you have another trajectory as an artist.’ This also calls for a reassessment of dominant value systems within the arts sector, which many interlocutors, including Ilinca Martorell and Ioana Crugel of the [Association of Heritage sites for Culture](#), described as increasingly inadequate.

Flexibility also involves recognising different timelines and trajectories. Some artists may be ready to begin new work immediately; others need time to navigate trauma, legal precarity, or rebuild their networks. Geoliane Arab of [Onda - Office national de diffusion artistique](#) warned against **extractive practices that demand**

**quick production**, especially on themes of displacement: ‘This practice of extractivism that exists with artists who are not in vulnerable situations continues to be reproduced and is even more accentuated with artists who are in this situation, because they have much less agency on what they choose to talk about, how they talk about it, and in what temporality.’

Responsiveness, then, requires institutions and funders to adjust expectations around outputs and timelines. As Clymene Christoforou put it: ‘Working with artists who are displaced is incredibly messy...the development takes longer. So, it’s not just about counting what we have delivered, but actually: how have we done that? What has been the process? What is the process of care?’ Some organisations are already embedding these principles into their work. At D6: Culture in Transit, artists are directly involved in shaping organisational activities and public programmes. Flanders Arts Institute uses its monthly open calls not only to support others but to adapt its own practices and grow institutional knowledge. Culture for All’s [Diversity Bridgers](#) programme formalised the expertise of international professionals around issues of racism and structural inequality, allowing them to train decision-makers across the Finnish cultural

sector and promote more equitable practices. Onda, meanwhile, has adapted its funding and support criteria to better respond to the specific conditions faced by at-risk and forcibly displaced artists.

Equally important is listening to and learning from artists’ critical feedback, especially when things go wrong. As Geoliane Arab suggested, ‘It would be very interesting to have an anonymous documentation from the perspective of the artists themselves of what has gone wrong...we can build a series of to-dos and not to-dos.’ **Creating structured spaces for honest, artist-led reflection helps institutions avoid repeating harmful practices and refine their approach over time.**

These examples reflect a shift toward shared authorship and mutual learning. Artist-led, process-driven approaches prioritise autonomy, reduce harm, and create conditions for long-term transformation. They also require humility on the part of host organisations, a readiness to listen, reflect, and adapt. This shift toward artist-led practice is not only more ethical, it is essential to building cultural systems that evolve with, rather than resist, complexity.

## Structural and organisational reconfiguration

Sustaining meaningful support for at-risk and forcibly displaced artists requires critical reflection on the structures and habits of the institutions providing that support. Across the conversations, it became clear that many challenges—such as limited access to platforms, aesthetic marginalisation, or lack of remuneration—are symptoms of deeper systemic patterns.

**The Western arts sector largely operates within frameworks that reward familiarity.**

Programmers and curators tend to work with artists whose references, aesthetic languages, or reputations are already known to them. This reflects a structural bias toward Western artistic norms, linear career trajectories, and established networks, placing newly arrived artists at a significant disadvantage. Their work, often shaped by radically different contexts and experiences, may be overlooked simply because it does not ‘fit’ existing curatorial languages or timelines. Geoliane Arab highlights that the first

step to addressing this bias is acknowledging the particular position Western institutions occupy in the global arts ecosystem. **Institutions must shift from offering development to artists towards cultivating their own capacity for listening, learning, and openness to different forms of knowledge.** Responsible hospitality is thus not just about what institutions offer artists, but about how they position themselves as spaces of ongoing learning.

Truly meaningful support demands that organisations rethink their ways of working, power distribution, and definitions of value. This entails new practices and new mindsets: greater flexibility, a longer-term perspective on artistic development, and openness to unfamiliar processes and aesthetics. Institutional expectations often compound these challenges, with rigid demands for clearly defined projects, immediate deliverables, and quick evaluation. As Anna Galas-Kosil noted, ‘What these communities need is genuine support and openness from institutions—including grantmakers—to communicate with them using different languages than with those familiar with such programmes.’ Trauma, legal precarity, language barriers, and disrupted professional trajectories make navigating rigid systems difficult.

Structural reconfiguration means moving **beyond integration**—where artists are expected to adapt to existing systems—toward a logic of institutional evolution that responds to new realities. Nicol Savinetti captures this shift: ‘inclusion often tries to expand what already exists, rather than imagining new ways forward through collective creation’.

Change also involves who holds decision-making power. Geoliane Arab emphasises that improving hospitality requires reconsidering recruitment, governance, and leadership to reflect the diversity of artists being supported. This goes beyond programming to accountability at all levels. Examples of organisations embracing

this transformation already exist. The Polish informal network REACT published guidelines to support organisations in becoming better hosts through shared learning. Immart advocates shifting from integration narratives toward a human rights framework, currently undergoing assessment under the [UN’s Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights](#). Flanders Arts Institute is actively moving away from inclusion logic, collaborating with Belgian organisations [Globe Aroma](#) and [Fameus](#) to develop support tools grounded not in integration but in common evolution.

Similarly, new initiatives embody shared responsibility for the global arts sector. [Sandberg Instituut’s Temporary Master in Lumbung Practice](#), rooted in the lumbung collective principles from documenta fifteen, prioritises collective learning, communal stewardship, and shared abundance over individual competition. Likewise, the French festival [Sens Interdits](#) experiments with shared responsibility by hosting a Palestinian company in Chile with support from the [Institut français du Chili](#), bypassing traditional national representation and truly embodying a logic of shared responsibility.

Reconfiguring institutions is neither linear nor easy, it demands discomfort, time, and ongoing dialogue. Yet the organisations that embrace this challenge—not as a burden, but as an opportunity—are helping build a cultural ecosystem that is more equitable, resilient, and responsive to today’s realities.

The reflections shared throughout this text underline that supporting at-risk and forcibly displaced artists requires long-term, structural commitment and a willingness to rethink how the cultural field operates. A number of shared features emerged from the practice-based conversations, pointing toward the elements that make support schemes not only functional, but meaningful, responsive, and sustainable.

# Key features of effective support schemes

This text reflects just a fragment of the ongoing conversations and efforts across the arts sector to support at-risk and displaced artists with care, imagination, and integrity. While there is no one-size-fits-all model, the examples shared here offer glimpses of what is possible when institutions are willing to listen, adapt, and act in solidarity. As this work continues, so does the opportunity to build a more responsive and connected cultural ecosystem, one that not only offers refuge, but creates space for new voices, practices, and ways of working to emerge and thrive.

## 1. Artist-led and co-created

Effective support schemes recognise the agency, expertise, and autonomy of displaced artists, allowing them to be active participants in designing, evaluating and/or adapting the support they receive.

## 2. Flexible and responsive

One-size-fits-all models do not work. Effective programmes are responsive to the different trajectories, timelines, and needs of artists, acknowledging that some may need immediate production support, while others require space, care and stability first.

## 3 Rooted in structural awareness

Schemes should be designed with a clear understanding of the systemic barriers facing displaced artists—such as legal precarity, racism, and aesthetic marginalisation—and actively work to dismantle them rather than reproduce them.

## 4. Long-term and sustainable

Beyond emergency or short-term interventions, effective support is embedded into longer professional pathways, offering continuity, stability, and room for growth.

## 5. Financially appropriate and flexible

Budgets go beyond project outputs to include the invisible labour of hosting—such as community-building, interpretation, mental health support, or childcare—and provide stable support for host organisations as well as artists.

## 6. Community-embedded

Effective schemes foster belonging and connection by creating moments and spaces for artists to build networks, share experiences, and access informal knowledge.

## 7. Accessible

Language, communication style, and application processes are adapted to different levels of familiarity with local systems, avoiding administrative jargon and opaque criteria.

## 8. Cross-sectoral and collaborative

Partnerships between organisations of different scales, profiles, and geographies strengthen impact. Shared tools, co-hosting models, and learning networks help avoid duplication and reduce isolation.

## 9. Institutionally reflexive

Organisations that are open to questioning their own assumptions, hierarchies, and working models make the most relevant support schemes. Professional development for artists goes hand in hand with institutional transformation.

## 10. Grounded in shared responsibility

Rather than reinforcing logics of rescue or representation, effective schemes are based on mutual accountability and global solidarity, recognising that cultural institutions are not neutral and that they must take an active role in building fairer futures.

### Acknowledgements to interviewees

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# CHAPTER 8

## Supportive Interventions for the Mental Health and Well-being of At-Risk and Displaced Arts Workers

By Milica Ilić

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Mental health and well-being are gaining increased attention within the arts sector. The topic has become more visible in international forums and a growing number of projects and programmes are beginning to address it in concrete ways. In the case of at-risk and forcibly displaced artists, mental health is not a secondary concern, it is central to their ability to rebuild a professional and personal life.

As highlighted in publications such as [Mental Health, Well-being and International Cultural Mobility](#) by On the Move, forcibly displaced artists often experience profound psychological distress. Their lives are frequently marked by trauma—rooted in **threats, persecution, or forced exile**—which is compounded by **instability, marginalisation, and uncertainty** in their new environments.

This article contributes to current efforts to improve mental health and well-being support for at-risk and displaced artists by drawing on the experience of those who work directly with them. It offers a set of perspectives and practical recommendations to help inform future support structures, policies, and initiatives.

## Scope and approach

This article is part of a broader series examining the situation of at-risk and displaced artists and art workers in Europe and the United States of America. It spans a vast and diverse terrain shaped by different migration histories, policy landscapes, and personal experiences.

It draws on several online and in-person conversations that took place in June 2025 with a range of actors involved in supporting at-risk and displaced artists. At its core are online interviews with representatives of The Green Room and their [GreenHaven Artist Residencies](#), the [Artistic Freedom Initiative](#) (AFI), [On the Move](#), and long-time activist and arts and human rights advocate Todd Lester. The article was further enriched by contributions shared during the seminar ‘Reimagining Hospitality’ held in Paris during the same period, co-organised by [Cité internationale des arts de Paris](#) in collaboration with [DutchCulture](#), On the Move, [Fresh Arts](#)

[Coalition Europe](#) (FACE), and [Artists at Risk Connection](#) (ARC). The examples and experiences discussed in Paris complemented and deepened those shared in the online conversations.

Based on this input, the author identified **key issues commonly cited as critical** by participants and formulated a set of actionable suggestions grounded in their experience, insights, and knowledge of both the possibilities and constraints of current support structures. Rather than providing a comprehensive analysis, this article offers a practice-based snapshot that centres the voices of cultural workers directly engaged in this field.

This contribution complements existing research, such as [The Barcelona Guidelines on Wellbeing and Temporary International Relocation of Human Rights Defenders at Risk](#). It confirms and illustrates broader findings through the lived

realities of those in the cultural sector and serves as an invitation to continue exploring mental health and well-being—not only for displaced artists, but also for those creating and sustaining structures of care.

What emerges from these discussions is a clear call for more coherent, long-term, and care-based approaches to the provision of support. The sections that follow unpack the core challenges and offer insights into how mental health and well-being are embedded in every layer of the support system.

## Well-being and mental health as a systemic issue

Mental health in the context of exile and forced migration is not a separate issue, it is inseparable from safety, professional development, funding, and long-term integration. It must be addressed transversally, as part of broader care structures, rather than treated as an optional add-on.

The [Green Room](#), a performing arts support structure led by psychologist Heather O'Donnell, offers a residency programme for at-risk and forcibly displaced artists. Residents access a range of psychosocial support based on individual needs, underscoring how **mental health is closely linked to stability and safety**. Without a secure environment, it becomes difficult to meet core needs, let alone support creative development.

ARC, Julie Trébault underlines the importance of culturally sensitive mental health support as part of broader care structures. ARC collaborates with medical professionals and makes a concerted effort to connect artists with psychologists who speak their language and understand their cultural background. This kind of tailored support plays a vital role in helping artists process trauma and begin to rebuild their lives.

A similar understanding comes from Jonathan Leu of the AFI, an organisation led by immigration and human rights attorneys that facilitates legal representation and resettlement assistance for international artists at risk. AFI does not directly provide mental health support, but it operates within a framework that recognises well-being as

a value embedded in broader structural support. As Leu notes, **saving an artist's life—or that of their family—does not in itself preserve the continuity of their artistic practice**. Well-being must be built into the process of creating a sustainable, enabling environment.

Todd Lester, a São Paulo-based artist and founder of [freeDimensional](#), who has spent two decades connecting at-risk artists with safe residencies as well as co-developing major support initiatives such as the [IIE Artist Protection Fund](#), Artist at Risk Connection, and the [Martin Roth-Initiative](#), argues that arts organisations are uniquely well positioned to provide both safety and care: 'If a person is arriving in a new and unfamiliar place, I can't imagine a better way to receive them than through a feisty arts organisation'.

Other organisations are also shifting toward community-rooted care approaches. One example is [Casa do Povo](#) in São Paulo, which hosts open-cycle psychoanalysis sessions within its diverse neighbourhood context. As Lester notes, such initiatives reflect an 'expanded space where psychosocial concerns and care are happening in different ways', not always through conventional therapeutic models, but through practices that are often **curatorial, experimental, and deeply embedded in local realities**. While he stresses the importance of interrogating and challenging superficial forms of care, he also highlights the potential of such community-grounded efforts to provide meaningful support in culturally diverse environments.

This resonates also with the work of the Green Room. Aware of the challenges of providing a continuous safe environment, they have moved toward a more holistic framework, inspired in part by principles of community psychology. Rather than prescribing a therapeutic path, they create the conditions in which individuals can undertake their own therapeutic or healing journeys, whether or not these are explicitly named as such.

Lester also emphasises the importance of early, proactive communication when hosting artists at risk. Hosts should name common risks early on, creating openness and reducing stigma. Documents such as the [Art Spaces Hosting Activism](#) tactical notebook can be **excellent guides** in this process.

At the same time, Marie Le Sourd from On the Move, currently accompanying Palestinian artists selected by the Institut français to benefit from the [Sawa Sawa Residency Programme](#), underlines the limits of standardised approaches. No context of risk and displacement is ever the same, which poses a real challenge for those designing support mechanisms. Each situation demands a rethinking of processes and tools, making it difficult to draw fixed lessons from past experience. As she notes: ‘There is no type of long-term solution; we always need to experiment with new ways’.

Together, these perspectives point to the need for hosting practices that are not only logistically sound but emotionally intelligent approaches that treat well-being not as an afterthought, but as a foundational condition for artistic and human flourishing.

## Financial stability as a condition for care

Funding is a crucial factor in both supporting the well-being of artists and enabling host organisations to carry out this work. However, as noted by Bojana Panevska, Programme Adviser for [TransArtists](#), many of the organisations involved lack the resources and capacity to do this sustainably.

For artists and hosts alike, funding is not only a structural concern, it is also a critical part of the mental health challenge. Support often falls between two funding systems—social and cultural—neither fully adapted to artists’ complex realities. For example, cultural funding often assumes visibility, while social funding may require community engagement, neither of which may be viable for an artist experiencing trauma or facing security concerns.

For example, the Green Room once hosted an artist who, due to the risks associated with his exile,

chose not to share their name when presenting his work. This necessary anonymity clashed with cultural sector norms, which often tie funding to visibility. Moreover, from a social funding perspective, artists are sometimes expected to engage communities—an expectation that may not align with their personal artistic trajectory, capacity or intentions.

Such mismatches add to the stress and fragility of the already precarious situations of hosts and beneficiaries. What is needed is not just more funding, but funding that is flexible, diversified, and grounded in real working conditions. Short-term, project-based models rarely align with the slow, unpredictable pace of healing and integration, as noted by Simon Dove, Executive Director of [CEC ArtsLink](#) and Mary Sherman, Executive Director of [Transcultural Exchange](#). Without stable, long-term support, care remains fragmented and unsustainable.

# Challenging the organisational frame

In the current organisational framework, there are clear divisions between those who provide support and those who receive it. While this structure may be necessary to some extent, it often reinforces power dynamics that inhibit more human-to-human relationships. These dynamics can lead to miscommunication, misunderstanding, and emotional distance.

Artist and researcher Outi Elena Valanto—also coordinator of the GreenHaven Artist Residencies—addresses these issues in her research [Dance-based methodologies for navigating emotional labor and power dynamics in artist residencies](#). She explores how dance-based practices might help prepare cultural professionals and institutions to host at-risk artists with greater empathy, sensitivity, and resilience. Her work advocates for a more embodied, relational approach, one that moves beyond administrative roles and toward genuine connection.

Another key element of a **care-based approach is continuity**. Time is essential, as the experience of forced displacement is often marked by prolonged, anxiety-laden processes—administrative, legal,

emotional, and social—that affect both artists and their families. Short-term residencies rarely align with this extended timeline.

In her research, Valanto observes that most residencies for at-risk artists are offered as one-time opportunities, which often fails to establish continuity or long-term support structures. As Jonathan Leu of AFI notes, while three months may seem substantial in the context of general artist residencies, it is often insufficient for artists who have lived through prolonged instability and precarity. Rather than offering stability, **short residencies can increase pressure and uncertainty**.

This point is echoed by Heather O'Donnell: 'I noticed when artists were coming, I was already thinking about them leaving because so much had to happen within those two or three months. They had to be ready to go out into the world. So it wasn't an opportunity just to come, rest, recover.' This is confirmed by Julie Trébault, Executive Director of ARC, who notes that a meaningful framework for well-being and mental health must include time—not only for producing, but for settling, healing, and redefining purpose.

## Identity and (mis)representation

Forced displacement can profoundly affect an artist's sense of value and identity. The loss of context and audience, disruption of recognition, precarious living conditions, and interruption of creative processes can lead to deep questioning of one's worth, belonging, and purpose. As Jonathan Leu puts it: 'The migration process in itself is the loss of some status, of some identity, but the arrival brings another level of complexity because then they're alone again.'

Supporting the displacement of at-risk artists and their hosting also requires careful work around

**risk assessment** and the artist's potential for support. In this sense, the artist's profile or previous notoriety becomes another site of tension and identity negotiation. Todd Lester points out that established or well-known artists may face a different kind of burden. When an artist with a strong public profile experiences displacement, they can be caught between two identities: on one hand, the accomplished artist they were; on the other, the symbolic 'poster figure' for a cause. As Lester notes, 'therein is confusion.' The weight of past recognition introduces new expectations, projections, or instrumentalisation.

Upon arrival, artists often confront externally imposed identities that feel limiting or alien. They must navigate the gap between imposed labels and their own sense of artistic self. While their circumstances clearly require tailored support, many are uneasy with labels like ‘artist in exile’ or ‘refugee artist,’ which can falsely separate them from their peers. As Outi Elena Valanto notes: ‘A really important part of the integration, or the afterlife process of artists, is to get rid of the status and label.’

Funding mechanisms often reinforce these categories. To access support, artists may feel compelled to adopt a ‘refugee’ identity. **The arts market, too, may reward narratives that align with donor or audience expectations.** This can pressure artists to perform a version of themselves that fits external frameworks.

Ultimately, this dynamic contributes to the instrumentalisation of the arts, where artists are valued more for their biography than their practice. Such positioning undermines their agency and reproduces the very marginalisation the support was designed to address.

## Community as recovery infrastructure

Creating—or re-creating—a sense of community is a crucial element in reaffirming an artist’s value and identity, and a **major building block in rebuilding both personal and professional lives.** As Heather O’Donnell notes: ‘What’s really needed is networking, not just among the artists themselves, but also with members of the local arts communities. Cross-networking, making connections, and simply being together and creating art—that’s essential.’

Community building is a key component of the professional development process put in place by AFI. They rely heavily on the support of artists who have already navigated the process successfully: ‘We keep the relationship with many people because we always have an opportunity to help them, or they can bring opportunities for us to push our mission forward.’ The community is also sustained through ongoing relationships built at different points in each artist’s trajectory. There are recurring patterns in the support process, where the organisation encounters artists at stages similar to those of earlier beneficiaries, and these overlaps create loops of mutual learning and support, reinforcing the network over time.

Support relationships often become strong bonds, especially in the early stages when artists are navigating extreme uncertainty. In some cases, these bonds are a crucial part of the artist’s sense of safety. As O’Donnell puts it: ‘Make sure that the artists feel that there’s safety, that there’s strong enough leadership, that it’s a strong enough programme to support them.’

These strong connections don’t necessarily end when the residency does, especially if the artist remains in the host country. AFI builds on this continuity by fostering long-term community ties. Artists previously supported by AFI often stay in touch and become part of a loose but supportive network. They share information, extend contacts, and help newcomers navigate the system: ‘They can in some way give back to the organisation by expanding our reach, our possibilities, our perspectives.’

As discussed during the meeting at the Cité internationale des arts de Paris, strong bonds require time and intention. Maintaining these connections over time is essential for building a resilient and lasting sense of community. Support structures should therefore not only focus on

the residency period, but include post-residency relationships as a key part of their design.

To foster this long-term perspective, more opportunities are needed for hosts and beneficiaries to come together, whether separately or in mixed settings. Spaces for shared reflection, exchange, and relationship-building are still too rare, and their absence limits the potential for longer-term solidarity and collaboration.

One example of thoughtful community integration is the [Artist Safe Haven Residency Program](#), which hosts at risk and forcibly displaced artists in New York City. The programme was developed

as a form of community organising and curatorial balancing, not simply as housing provision. Residents were selected with care to ensure a diversity of backgrounds and needs, avoiding the concentration of individuals from a single recent crisis zone to **prevent retraumatisation or overburdening**. The goal was to foster a mutual relationship between the residents and the surrounding community—recognising artists as neighbours and peers, not representatives or spokespeople for their crises. This careful curatorial approach helped create a more sustainable and respectful environment for both artists and the host community.

## Building collective capacity

Supporting at-risk and displaced artists requires the mobilisation of a wide range of competences that are rarely present within a single organisation. This work demands a large and diverse network of collaborators across sectors, each bringing different knowledge and skills.

Todd Lester, reflecting on his work with freeDimensional, strongly advocates for deeper collaboration between the human rights field and the artist residency sector and notes: ‘Even before we formally started this kind of matchmaking in 2003, I already had a notebook full of examples—an underground ‘railroad’ of sorts—where this kind of support had worked informally. I still believe that the human rights world and the arts sector need to come together more intentionally.’ At the seminar at Cité internationale des arts, participants highlighted connections with organisations working directly with refugees as underdeveloped but particularly valuable.

This reinforces the idea that meaningful support can emerge when different ecosystems connect—not only cultural, but also legal, medical, psychological, social, and activist sectors. For example, The Green Room, as a support centre focused on psychosocial care, may not have

in-house production expertise, but this is a competence that other organisations can provide: ‘We’re speaking a little bit utopically—it’s probably not possible to have all the needed competences in the room—but the more, the better. People with expertise in law, in visa processes, people with firsthand experience of refugee status—all that makes the programme stronger.’

For Outi Elena Valanto, the most important task, then, is to multiply and diversify partnerships: ‘You need perspectives from different people because everyone has their own area of expertise.’ To bring together this range of competences and provide consistent, multifaceted support, a single organisation or residency is rarely enough. Yet coalitions remain rare: ‘There aren’t enough hosting structures built on collaboration or shared responsibility,’ she adds.

Todd Lester also reinforces the importance of diverse lived experience within teams, noting the specific contribution of neurodiverse team members: ‘If you have someone who’s neurodiverse, working as an administrator with mental health issues, they can bring a lot of their own personal knowledge into what they do for a stakeholder.’



Language is another essential element of team diversity. As Outi Elena Valanto notes: ‘If you don’t have a common language, or if you need to use translators, it affects the entire process. It influences power relations and impacts the general well-being on both sides.’ Having someone on the team who speaks the artist’s

language significantly improves communication and trust. Beyond language, cultural literacy is just as critical. As Jonathan Leu of AFI explains: ‘The way people speak, love, care for their families, and create art—having that insight is much more legitimate and much more skillful when it comes to assessing a situation.’

## Support systems for hosts

As the demand for supporting at-risk and displaced artists grows, so does the need to strengthen the capacities of the teams most directly involved in this work. Ilinca Martorell, in charge of residencies at the [Association des Centres culturels de rencontre](#) (ACCR), highlights the pressure that hosts can feel when welcoming artists navigating displacement and uncertainty. Organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of being better prepared to provide mental health support, not only to the artists, but also to themselves.

Several organisations, such as ARC, the [PAUSE programme](#) and Cité internationale des arts de Paris, have already integrated mental health training into their operations. At ARC, for example, support for staff is taken seriously. As Executive Director Julie Trébault explains: ‘You cannot care for others if you are not well yourself.’ In response, ARC has established regular secondary trauma support group sessions facilitated by a trauma specialist, creating space for staff to process the emotional weight of their responsibilities. The organisation also ensures access to individual psychological support during periods of acute crisis—such as the Taliban takeover or the ongoing war in Gaza—when constituents face heightened risk and the team experiences exceptional strain. Other inspiring practices can be found in documents such as [Wellbeing During Temporary International Relocation and the Good Practices for the Implementation of the 2019 Barcelona Guidelines](#).

**Hosting at-risk artists** requires more than specific knowledge, skills, and competences; it also demands emotional attention and personal commitment, often to a degree that makes it difficult to maintain healthy boundaries. As Jonathan Leu notes: ‘You cannot be at home in the evening with your family and be crazy because of what happens.’ The intense bonds that often form during the hosting period can create a high level of dependency, particularly in the early stages, when the artist is navigating deep uncertainty. It is therefore crucial to clarify roles from the outset and avoid overextension. Maintaining clear boundaries helps build trust and prevents burnout on both sides.

**Peer-to-peer exchanges** are invaluable—not only for filling skill gaps, but also for creating meaningful human connections with others who have gone through similar experiences. One key insight from the closed meeting of support organisations for at-risk artists was the urgent need for a transnational support network that also recognises and supports the mental health and well-being of hosts.

In addition, tools grounded in artistic practice—perhaps dance and movement, as suggested by Outi Elena Valanto—could be developed to support hosts, providing coping mechanisms, space for reflection, and creative methods for managing emotional labour. Such tools can help hosts understand their own limits and establish boundaries they feel comfortable with, while remaining engaged and supportive in their roles.



# Towards effective support structures for at-risk and displaced artists and culture professionals

The following features have been distilled from the conversations, practices and experiences shared throughout this document. They outline key elements that support structures should embed in order to respond meaningfully to the needs of at-risk and displaced artists. These are not fixed prescriptions but evolving principles grounded in practice.

## Key features of effective support schemes for at-risk and displaced artists:

### 1. Mental health and well-being embedded throughout

Effective schemes treat mental health and well-being as **foundational**, not optional. This includes **both artist support and care for staff involved**, using **formal training** and **creative, embodied tools** for emotional resilience. Models often **combine formal and informal approaches** and are **rooted in cultural sensitivity and community-based care**.

### 2. Time and continuity as structural components

Support is conceived as a **process**, not a one-off intervention. **Longer residencies and progressive models and tools** allow for rest, healing, creation and the redefinition of purpose. **Follow-up** and **peer-based networks** provide continuity beyond the residency period.

### 3. Respect for autonomy and identity

Schemes are designed to **respect the privacy of artists** and avoid imposing visibility. **Artists keep their agency** and guide their own level of public exposure. Support is **not conditional** on personal narrative or symbolic value, and **artistic merit is valued** on its own terms and is context-related.

### 4. Shared responsibility and cross-sectoral collaboration

**Responsibility of hosting is shared** across organisations and is rooted in multiple sectors. **Cross-sector alliances** (including arts, human rights, legal, psychosocial, and civil society actors) bring together complementary skills and ensure systemic support.

### 5. Ethical relationship building and role clarity

**Emotional dynamics** between artists and hosts are openly acknowledged. **Clear roles, boundaries and reflective practices** help sustain care. Strong **interpersonal connections** are supported and encouraged, and **dependency is addressed**.

### 6. Inclusive and diverse team structures

Teams often **include people with lived experience of displacement**, along with interdisciplinary competences. **Language skills** and **cultural literacy** are treated as central to trust and well-being.

Supporting at-risk and forcibly displaced artists is not only a humanitarian imperative, it also invites a broader reflection on how care is embedded in the structures and practices of the cultural sector. The experiences shared here underline that well-being is not a separate issue. It is inseparable from safety, recognition, funding, time, and belonging. When support is approached in a holistic way, it can open space for transformation—not just for the artists concerned, but also for the organisations and communities involved.

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# CHAPTER 9

## Cities as Safe Havens for At-risk and Displaced Artists

by Jordi Baltà Portolés

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Several contemporary analyses have emphasised the role of cities, local communities and local governments as guarantors of human rights, including for migrants, asylum seekers, refugees and other minority groups. According to the late political scientist Benjamin Barber, cities arise as ‘glocal’ defenders of rights because, among other things, the defence of rights flourishes best in communities that are diverse, such as cities.<sup>41</sup> Other authors have also emphasised how diversity, mixing and tolerance are inherent to cities, often contrasting this with nations’ tendency to restrict diversity.<sup>42</sup> Indeed, recent years have frequently seen tensions, in Europe, North America and elsewhere, between local and national governments in debates around fundamental freedoms (e.g., LGBTQI+ friendly cities) and the welcoming of refugees and migrants (e.g., ‘Sanctuary Cities’), among other rights-related issues. It is also important to recall that cities, towns and local communities, through their cultural venues and public spaces, are frequently the spaces where cultural rights can be more directly exercised.<sup>43</sup>

This set of factors provides some background to explain why cities and city networks have become significant actors in the relocation of at-risk and displaced artists and culture professionals, either directly (as in the case of ICORN, which this chapter will address later) or through collaboration with civil society organisations and other stakeholders.<sup>44</sup> The former UN Special Rapporteur on Cultural Rights, Karima Bennouna, stressed the importance of cities, stating that, by becoming safe havens for artists and cultural workers, they illustrate a spirit of generosity and inclusion.<sup>45</sup> United Cities and Local Governments ([UCLG](#)), the main global platform of local and regional authorities, has recently adopted a guiding document in the field of culture, which invites cities and local governments to provide direct or indirect support to artists and culture professionals who are at risk of being persecuted because of their work.<sup>46</sup> This builds on previous

initiatives, such as the 2020 Rome Charter, which invited cities to support the work of cultural rights defenders.<sup>47</sup> At the EU level, the Council Conclusions on at-risk and displaced artists, adopted in 2023, invited Member States to consider taking further measures to enhance the capacity to offer safe havens and cities of refuge for at-risk and displaced artists, and to contribute to networking for such artists.<sup>48</sup>

This chapter examines the role of cities and city networks in providing support to at-risk and displaced artists and culture professionals, through a description and analysis of some relevant initiatives, including [ICORN](#), [Shelter City](#) and [City of Sanctuary UK](#). Each with their own characteristics, they serve to attest a range of approaches through which cities can become safe havens.

41 Barber, B., ‘Cities as Glocal Defenders of Rights’, in van Lindert, T. and Lettinga, D. (eds.), [The Future of Human Rights in an Urban World: Exploring Opportunities, Threats and Challenges](#), Amnesty International Netherlands, 2014.

42 See e.g., Bauman, Z., ‘[City of Fears, City of Hopes](#)’, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2003; Pascual, J., ‘On Citizen Participation in Local Cultural Policy Development for European Cities’, in Several Authors, [Guide to Citizen Participation in Local Cultural Policy Development for European Cities](#), Interarts, Ecumest and ECF, 2007; and Khanna, P., [Connectography: Mapping the Global Network Revolution](#), Orion Publishing, 2016.

43 Martinell, A., ‘Cultural Life, Local Life’, UCLG, 2014 (no longer available online).

44 Jones, M., Nah, A. and Bartley, P., ‘Introduction’, in Müller, M. (ed.), [Temporary Shelter and Relocation Initiatives: Perspectives of Managers and Participants](#), ifa, 2019.

45 Bennouna, K.; Bergamo, L.; and Trifone, L., ‘[Conversation](#)’, 4<sup>th</sup> UCLG Culture Summit, Izmir, September 2021.

46 UCLG, [C21Plus: A renewed commitment to making culture central in sustainable cities and communities](#), UCLG, 2025.

47 Roma Capitale and UCLG – Culture Committee, [The 2020 Rome Charter: The right to participate fully and freely in cultural life is vital to our cities and communities](#), Roma Capitale and UCLG – Culture Committee, 2020.

48 Council of the European Union (2023), [Council Conclusions on At-Risk and Displaced Artists](#), para 14.

# Context, objectives and goals

ICORN – International Cities of Refuge Network is a non-governmental organisation established in 2006. The network built on the experience of the International Cities of Asylum Network (INCA), established in the mid-1990s by the International Parliament of Writers to allow persecuted writers and journalists to be safely hosted in cities, thus symbolising the role of cities as spaces of protection.<sup>49</sup> ICORN, with a Secretariat based in Stavanger, Norway, currently involves over 80 cities across Europe and the Americas, which offer protective residencies to writers, journalists and artists at risk. Each city runs the ICORN programme independently, in cooperation with, and with support from, the ICORN Secretariat

ICORN's vision is that of improved conditions for freedom of expression worldwide. Its mission involves enabling cities around the world to provide safe havens for **persecuted writers and artists**, working together to advance freedom of expression, defend democratic values, and promote international solidarity.

Shelter City was founded in 2012 by non-profit organisation [Justice & Peace Netherlands](#) and it currently involves 25 Shelter Cities around the world, including 14 in the Netherlands and 11 across Europe, Africa and Latin America. It defines itself as a global movement of cities, organisations and people who support **human rights defenders at risk**, offering them a safe and inspiring space to re-energise, receive tailor-made support and engage with allies to reinforce their local actions for change. In each participating city, a network of organisations and citizens works to provide shelter to human rights defenders. Shelter City includes artists and culture professionals among the human rights defenders covered by its programmes.

City of Sanctuary UK, which started its activities in 2005, is an umbrella organisation for hundreds of community groups, local authorities, universities and other organisations that, across the UK, work to provide a culture of solidarity, inclusivity and welcome to people forced to flee their homes and who are seeking sanctuary. At the end of 2024, City of Sanctuary UK involved over 100 local groups, 73 local councils (rising to 168 when counting those that engaged in individual sessions), 915 schools, 43 arts organisations and 26 library services (involving 454 individual libraries overall).<sup>50</sup>

City of Sanctuary advocates for people seeking sanctuary across the UK, through values of inclusion, openness, participation, inspiration and integrity. While the organisation does not explicitly identify artists at risk as a target group, it acts to ensure that people can **seek safety and live in dignity**, can contribute to building better futures together with local communities, that local councils that host refugees are supported adequately, and that a fairer, faster and more efficient system is established to protect refugees and asylum seekers.

Within this context, City of Sanctuary's Local Authority Network brings together local councils that are working to create a culture of welcome, inclusion and empowerment for people seeking sanctuary. Meanwhile, Arts Stream of Sanctuary is the network connecting arts organisations that work with refugees, tell stories of migration and bring communities together. This network is developed in partnership with [Counterpoint Arts](#), an organisation that supports the **arts by and about refugees and migrants**.

49 Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, [‘Report on the Charter of Cities of Asylum. Explanatory Memorandum’](#), 1995; Shuddhashar, [‘Helge Lunde talks to Shuddhashar about exile and why it is always by definition about loss, suffering, uprootedness’](#), 2018.

50 City of Sanctuary UK, [Our Impact 2024](#).

## Funding and resources

ICORN relies on the support of trusts, foundations, public and private donors, and membership fees. Its main funders include the [Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#) and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation ([NORAD](#)), the [Swedish Arts Council](#) and the [Stavanger Municipality](#), with other significant contributions made by the [Sølvberget Library & Culture Centre](#), the [Fritt Ord Foundation](#), the [Rogaland County](#), the [Open Society Foundations](#). Additionally, ICORN's cities pay an annual membership fee and are in charge of covering the costs of hosting resident artists, writers and journalists (accommodation, scholarship or grant, travel expenses, visa procedures, insurance, coordination staff, etc.). The management of each city residency operates independently, and funding models vary depending on relevant legislation, local partnerships, etc.

For several years, ICORN had a close connection with [PEN International](#), the international association of writers. Among other things, for some years PEN International was in charge of evaluating the authenticity of authorship and artistic production of candidate writers and journalists. While such collaboration no longer exists, several branches of PEN International

are involved in local ICORN partnerships in their respective cities, and both networks collaborate in other initiatives.

[Justice & Peace](#), the organisation that manages Shelter City, receives funding from several public and private bodies. In the case of its activities in the field of human rights defenders, including Shelter City in the Netherlands, funding comes primarily from the [Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs](#). Other contributors in 2024 included the [City of The Hague](#), the Dutch branch of Oxfam ([Oxfam Novib](#)), the [Open Society Foundations](#), and the US National Endowment for Democracy ([NED](#)).<sup>51</sup> Participating shelter cities establish their own mechanisms to support the implementation of activities.

City of Sanctuary UK relies, for its activities at network level, on a diverse range of grants and donations from foundations, trusts and other public and private sources. In 2024, the most significant sources included the [Esmée Fairbairn Foundation](#), the [Paul Hamlyn Foundation](#), the [This Day Foundation](#), the [Lloyds Bank Foundation](#), and the [City Bridge Foundation](#).<sup>52</sup> Local community groups and organisations have their own funding models and are encouraged to develop fundraising activities.

## Target groups and conditions

ICORN offers residencies to writers (creative, non-fiction, translators, publishers, etc.), artists (visual artists, performing artists, musicians, film and media professionals, etc.) and journalists who are at risk due to their work and professional activities and who cannot continue their work or express themselves freely in their home country or region. It provides temporary, but long-term (two years, in most cases), relocation and emphasises

that it is **not an urgent response** organisation and does not offer emergency residencies.

The network does not have a specific focus in terms of age, gender or country or origin. When applying for a residency, candidates can indicate that they would like to travel **with their family** (spouse/partner and/or children under 18 years). In this case, if their application is selected, their

51 Justice & Peace, [‘Financieel Jaarverslag 2024’](#).

52 City of Sanctuary UK, [‘Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 December 2024’](#).

profile is presented to the ICORN Cities of Refuge that have the capacity to host a couple or a family, as some cities can only host a single person.

Meanwhile, Shelter City provides support to human rights defenders. Artists and cultural professionals who face threats and challenges due to their human rights work, including censorship, detention, legal prosecution or imprisonment, harassment, attacks, fines and travel bans are recognised as human rights defenders by Shelter City, which affirms that ‘although the creative responses of artists are vital to uncovering human rights violations all over the world, **their role as human rights defenders is often overlooked**’, and limited protection is offered to them as a result.<sup>53</sup>

To be eligible for stays in the Netherlands, candidates need to be willing and able to **return**

**to their country of origin** after three months, and be willing to speak publicly about their experience or about human rights in their country to the extent that their security situation allows. They are also expected to have a conversational level of English. Shelter cities based in other world regions may establish other specific criteria—e.g., the latest call for Shelter City Costa Rica targeted human rights defenders from other countries in Central America,<sup>54</sup> whereas Shelter City in Rome gives priority to human rights defenders from the Middle East and North Africa.<sup>55</sup>

As noted earlier, the focus of City of Sanctuary UK lies more on the fostering of a culture of welcome and **solidarity towards asylum seekers and refugees** in the UK, rather than on the provision of direct support to artists or other individuals at risk.

## Application and selection processes

ICORN receives requests for protection on a rolling basis. Applicants need to provide details about their personal and professional profile, as well as the human rights aspects which motivate their application. All information is received and handled in confidence by the ICORN Secretariat, which also researches and assesses the validity of the application in accordance with the organisation’s mandate.

The organisation receives more applications than the number of residencies it can offer within its network; for instance, after the change of regime in Afghanistan in 2021, ICORN received approximately 1,000 applications from that country, whereas it can only host approximately 20 people at risk per year. To determine which candidates are given priority, relevant **criteria include the severity and vulnerability** of their

cases, the ability to cross-check the evidence provided, geographic and gender balance, as well as the ability to find cities that would be able to host them. When a candidate is approved as deserving ICORN support, they will be proposed to available Cities of Refuge. Typically, cities establish additional, specific criteria for selecting artists from among the different candidates proposed by the ICORN Secretariat. Some cities have a small steering committee to make the decision or, after local technical services examine the profiles proposed and provide their advice, leave the final decision in the hands of the mayor or other relevant decision-makers.

Shelter City publishes two **annual calls for residencies** for stays in the Netherlands: a call published around March/April for residencies

53 Shelter City, ‘[Artists & cultural professionals](#)’.

54 Shelter City, ‘[Shelter City Costa Rica abre su period de convocatoria - 2025](#)’, 26 March 2025.

55 Shelter City, ‘[Shelter City Rome](#)’.



held between September and December; and another one launched in August/September for stays between April and July of the following year. Shelter Cities in other countries manage applications directly, with varying regularity and similar waiting times (for instance, the latest call for Shelter City in Costa Rica, which opened in March 2025, was meant for stays between June and December 2025). Among the criteria that may guide the decisions are the added value of a stay in a Shelter City, as well as gender, geographic and thematic balance. Individual Shelter Cities outside the Netherlands may

establish additional criteria. For instance, Shelter City York, a programme managed by the University of York's Centre for Applied Human Rights, in the UK, provides fellowships for human rights defenders at risk who can engage in human rights research or in a writing fellowship. As a result, the application process involves prior nomination by a recognised civil society organisation or an intergovernmental organisation working in the field of human rights, and the assessment process involves analysing candidates' ability to engage in research and writing work.<sup>56</sup>

## Types of support provided

The standard duration of an ICORN residency is two years. The organisation emphasises that it provides temporary support, rather than being a refugee organisation.<sup>57</sup> For the duration of the residency, the hosting city provides appropriate furnished accommodation for the resident and, where applicable, their family; a scholarship or grant for the period of the ICORN residency, the amount of which is agreed between the city and the ICORN Secretariat, in accordance with local living costs; access to public services in the country and city of residence; travel expenses related to relocation, for the resident and their family, from their country of residence to the City of Refuge (as well as departure arrangements at the end of the residency); and fees for visas, passports and other necessary documentation. It also helps residents in obtaining a visa and a residence permit in the host country, provides them with appropriate working conditions and support during the stay, health and residential insurance for the resident and their family, and access to services to learn the language of the

host country. The hosting city also supports the building and **developing professional networks and opportunities** during the residency, at local, national and, where possible, cross-border level.

The terms and conditions of ICORN residencies vary from city to city. However, in addition to the aspects outlined above, in all cases the City of Refuge helps the ICORN resident in practical matters, including finding accommodation, signing up for language learning, finding legal support, etc. A handbook<sup>58</sup> published by the Swedish Arts Council for ICORN Cities of Refuge in Sweden provides a checklist of tasks to be done by city coordinators before the resident arrives, as well as during their stay and prior to its completion. In the initial phase, relevant tasks include, in addition to the elements listed above, reviewing the safety analysis, reviewing available **support for mental health** issues, preparing work equipment and creating a reference group within the local cultural community for professional opportunities.

56 Shelter City, '[Shelter City York: Nominations for Fellowships](#)', 21 January 2025.

57 An exception to this is Norway, where ICORN residents have historically been included in the refugee resettlement quota approved by the Parliament and granted refugee status as a result. This also makes it easier for the 26 Cities of Refuge in Norway to host residents who do not hold a valid passport (but who can be recognised as refugees) and to travel with their families, as relatives are also considered refugees and their costs are more easily covered. The reduction of Norway's refugee resettlement quota in 2025 has significantly limited the ability of Norwegian cities to host ICORN residents. See ICORN, '[Norway's 2025 refugee resettlement quota is full: What does it mean for ICORN's work?](#)', 30 July 2025.

58 Swedish Arts Council, [City of Refuge – A Handbook for Swedish ICORN Cities of Refuge](#), Swedish Arts Council, 2025.

Indeed, Cities of Refuge also aim to enable residents to continue their work and build a professional network locally, nationally and internationally. In Paris, for instance, residents are hosted at the [Cité internationale des arts](#), an organisation that hosts over 300 artists every month and which some residents have described as ‘a zone of inspiration and motivation’.<sup>59</sup> The Cité holds weekly Open Studios events that enable some residents to make their work known and network with others. In Warsaw, the first ICORN resident, who arrived in 2024, has engaged in international conferences and national events during her stay, allowing her to connect with other members of the Uyghur diaspora and engage in a broader academic network.<sup>60</sup> The profile of residents, including their professional discipline, experience and needs, are significant factors in determining the type of support provided (e.g. residents with a more academic or artistic profile, different language skills, etc.).

Human rights defenders hosted by Shelter City are provided with a safe space for three months, which allows them to rest and re-energise. During their stay, they receive tailor-made support, which may be in the form of **medical care, psychological support, security training or capacity building** to develop their expertise. They can also take part in wellbeing activities and exchange experiences, raise awareness and expand their network

with new allies, including fellow human rights defenders, people and organisations.<sup>61</sup>

Some of the activities undertaken by City of Sanctuary UK in the arts relate to engaging with artists from refugee or migrant backgrounds and generating an enabling environment to develop their work—including by inviting them to tell their stories, including them in artistic programmes (regular seasons, dedicated festivals, etc.) and in discussion and planning exercises, or providing them with studio space, materials, use of facilities, and more.

Principles underpinning this work include the understanding that art can shape a culture of welcome and can turn empathy into action, by celebrating the contribution of people seeking sanctuary, enabling relationships of friendship and solidarity, and promoting an understanding of asylum and refugee issues, particularly when refugee voices are heard directly.<sup>62</sup> There is also an understanding that **refugees and migrants make hugely valuable contributions to the arts, culture and society** by, among other things, presenting multiple perspectives that result in new ways of seeing and questioning, and that displacement can be both a traumatic and a transformative experience, which should be reflected in all its complexity.<sup>63</sup>

## Monitoring and evaluation

Since 2006, ICORN has hosted **over 300 writers, journalists and artists**, with approximately 15-20 residencies being offered annually at present. Anecdotal experience collected by city coordinators indicates that the presence of ICORN residents contributes to raise freedom of speech

and the right to work safely, and that the impact in terms of artistic careers and personal and professional development is generally positive, but highly variable depending on the individual profile and the specific setting. Being hosted by a recognised network generally enhances the

59 Cité internationale des arts, [‘Interview with Amira Al-Sharif’](#).

60 Erkmen, R., [‘Rabigül’s Story – the story of an Uyghur woman who chose Warsaw to escape persecution by the Chinese government’](#), 2025; and ICORN, [‘Dr. Rabigül Erkmen: The Voice of the Uyghurs and the Fight for Memory’](#), 24 July 2025.

61 It has not been possible to obtain more detailed information about the support provided.

62 Grace, A. and Counterpoint Arts, [Sanctuary in the Arts Resource Pack](#), City of Sanctuary, 2019.

63 Counterpoints Arts, [‘Core beliefs’](#).

visibility of artists, writers and journalists and can contribute to raising their profile.<sup>64</sup>

On its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022, Shelter City conducted a qualitative impact assessment, including interviews with former residents. The

analysis found that most participants had returned home after their stay, that they were applying improved approaches and strategies as a result of the programme, and that they felt generally **safer, more protected and better connected** to a larger community.<sup>65</sup>

## Challenges and limitations

The rise of **far-right discourses and anti-migrant sentiments** in many countries has been identified as a significant challenge in interviews conducted for this chapter, because of its impact both in terms of the ability of resident artists and culture professionals to feel safe in their host cities, and because of the reluctance of some cities to welcome new artists. The current climate also limits the ability of city networks and other organisations involved in temporary relocation initiatives to raise funds from third sources.

At a more micro level, the **mental well-being** of resident artists and culture professionals can often become a challenge for host cities, which do not always have the relevant resources to support it. On a related note, some interviewees noted that, along with focusing on displaced artists' ability to pursue their work and develop professional networks, it was also important to create an environment in which they could make friends and **develop more informal relationships**, something which may sometimes be neglected. Other challenges identified by programme coordinators include the ability of recently arrived artists, writers and journalists to navigate the local cultural scene, particularly

in large cities; and the specific challenge for residents whose work is largely language based (e.g., writers, journalists) to pursue their careers in a new environment, particularly where their knowledge of the local language is limited.

Some interviewees noted the critical importance of considering, from an early stage, the end of the residencies, and how support can be provided to maximise the opportunities for hosted artists and culture professionals **once their stay comes to an end**. There is a recognition, among some programme managers, that, even if efforts in this respect are made, they are frequently insufficient, despite a number of successful stories.

A final reflection concerns the risk that networks providing temporary relocation abroad contribute to the **'brain drain' of countries in the Global South**. In this respect, some interviewees underlined the need to give priority to relocation in countries and regions near beneficiaries' original location, whenever possible, and the understanding that hosting artists and culture professionals abroad is not a goal in itself, but rather a means to protect them and enable them to live and work.

64 Based on interviews conducted for this research, as well as information available on the ICORN website.

65 DBMresearch, [Shelter City: Exploring the impact of a decade of temporary relocation experiences](#), Shelter City, 2022.

# Considerations for city-led support programmes

Organisations like ICORN emphasise that, despite an increasing number of applications from artists and culture professionals in need of support, existing resources and learning from the past make it necessary to particularly attend the *qualitative* aspects of hosting, rather than primarily the *quantitative* number of artists hosted. In this respect, **building the capacities of local coordination teams**, including the staff in charge of welcoming and facilitating the stay of artists, is a critical requirement, which needs time. This is an aspect that could be considered in future initiatives in this field.

In addition to knowledge-sharing and advice provided by network secretariats and peer cities abroad, the existence of national **networks of cities** is also a significant factor, both among ICORN (e.g., national networks of cities in France, Norway, Poland, Sweden, etc.) and Shelter City (e.g., Dutch Shelter Cities) participants, which could also inspire developments elsewhere.

One final recommendation raised by some interviewees concerns the need to better **connect existing networks of temporary relocation initiatives** as well as those active in the arts and culture. This could simultaneously contribute to broadening the opportunities for at-risk and displaced artists and culture professionals at the end of their residencies, developing the skills and capacities for programme managers through peer learning, and enhancing the visibility and understanding of the situation of those at risk and the need to provide them with support.

In addition to the networks and organisations covered in this chapter, this recommendation could be particularly useful for other networks like On the Move (through the At-risk and Displaced Arts Workers working group and the organisations involved in it), other Creative Europe-funded networks, UCLG, and other city, human rights and cultural networks. In this respect, the range of examples presented in this chapter could provide inspiration to scale up this type of support and connect better the networks and support mechanisms for artists and culture professionals at risk.

## Acknowledgements to interviewees

Sviatlana Haidaloniak, coordinator of ICORN programme in Warsaw, Warsaw Observatory of Culture, Poland  
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 Isabelle Mallez, International Relations, City of Paris' Department of Cultural Affairs, coordinator of ICORN programme in Paris, France



# CHAPTER 10

## Case Study: The EU Pilot Fellowship Scheme SAFE for At-risk Researchers

by Martina Hájková

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Established in September 2024, this initiative operates across the Member States of the European Union with support from the European Commission’s Research Executive Agency ([REA](#)), under the Programme for Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions ([PPPA](#)). The project, set to run until September 2027, is implemented by a consortium led by the German Academic Exchange Service ([DAAD](#)), [Campus France](#), [PAUSE](#)—hosted by the Collège de France—and [UNIMED](#), the Mediterranean Universities Union. The consortium is further strengthened by eight associated partners, including the [Alexander von Humboldt Foundation](#), [Aristotle University of Thessaloniki](#), the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research ([DZS](#)), the Finnish National Agency for Education ([EDUFI](#)), the European University Association ([EUA](#)), the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange ([NAWA](#)), the Dutch Organisation for Internationalisation in Education ([Nuffic](#)), and [Sofia University St. Kliment Ohridski](#). With a total budget of 12 million euros, the project employs a cascade funding mechanism to achieve its ambitious objectives<sup>66</sup>.

## Background

Support in Europe for researchers at risk is fragmented and limited to a handful of countries and organisations providing sustained support for researchers at risk. Recent years have seen a sudden inflows of at-risk scholars (e.g. from Afghanistan, Syria, Ukraine), demonstrating a clear need and challenge to respond<sup>67</sup>. On 20 March 2023, at the initiative of the European Parliament, the European Commission launched a [call for applications](#) to set up a programme of European fellowships for researchers at risk. This call for projects is part of the Commission’s pilot projects and preparatory actions in the fields of sport, culture, research and innovation.

The PAUSE programme, which has supported at-risk scientists for more than seven years, joined forces with French and European partners in a consortium to answer the call. The [Supporting At-risk researchers with Fellowships in Europe](#) (SAFE), submitted to the European

Commission in September 2023, was selected to implement this pilot scheme for a period of three years, from September 2024 to September 2027.

SAFE is run by the aforementioned consortium and is fully funded by the Research Executive Agency (REA) as a pilot project to develop and test a suitable structure to select and fund researchers (PhD-doctoral students and/or Post-Doctorate researchers) at risk at EU higher education and research institutions.

The members of the consortium divide the supervision of the project activities among themselves: overall project coordination by DAAD, communication and networking activities by Campus France, provision of matchmaking services by UNIMED, design and implementation of selection mechanism by DAAD, fellowship management by Campus France, and capitalisation by PAUSE.

66 Contacts for enquiries on the SAFE project: [info.safe@daad.de](mailto:info.safe@daad.de) (information on the call for applications), [info.safe@uni-med.net](mailto:info.safe@uni-med.net) (information on the matchmaking service), [safe.pause@college-de-france.fr](mailto:safe.pause@college-de-france.fr) (information on policy recommendations), [safe@campusfrance.org](mailto:safe@campusfrance.org) (other questions).

67 Horizon 2020 funded several European-level projects supporting researchers at risk under the science4refugees framework. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) has since 2019 supported organisations working with researchers at risk through the InspireEurope and InspireEurope+ projects (these projects could not provide fellowships). The most recent support scheme under MSCA for researchers at risk is the MSCA4Ukraine fellowship scheme.

## Objectives and goals

The main objective of the project is to facilitate connection between researchers at risk from non-EU countries and research institutions from the EU Member States and to enable collaboration by covering costs and providing a matchmaking service.

The pilot is a fellowship scheme which involves one open call for researchers that in 2025 awarded 56 fully funded fellowships (for a minimum of 12 months and up to 24 months) for doctoral and postdoctoral researchers of any non-EU nationality to work at a research institution in the EU as well as some compensation for the hosting institutions. Matchmaking was an optional service in this open call phase that helped to match researchers at risk with potential host institutions in the EU with the aim of developing a joint

proposal. The hosting institutions are obliged to provide support (legal, housing, and more) to their selected researchers.

The aim of the call itself was to contribute to the EU priorities under the European Research Area (ERA) on fundamental values and academic freedom, notably but not restricted to the work under the ERA Policy Agenda Action 6 on academic freedom.

Also, the pilot aims to contribute to the skills development and career enhancement of the supported individual researchers, such as through new transferable skills and competences, new knowledge, enhanced networking and communication capacities, and long-lasting collaborative links with EU counterparts.

## Funding and resources

This project is funded by a grant from Research Executive Agency (REA) under a pilot grant scheme. The call was open for submissions from 28 June 2023, with the deadline to apply on 7 September 2023. This action is part of the 2023 [\*\*Annual Work Programme for the Pilot Projects and Preparatory Actions in the area of Sport, Culture, Research and Innovation\*\*](#).

Funds are distributed between the selected fellow researchers and host institutions. Fellowship value for Doctoral and/or PhD students is 3,400 EUR gross monthly salary with a 600 EUR monthly mobility allowance, while for postdoctoral researchers it provides 5,080 EUR gross monthly salary with a 600 EUR monthly mobility allowance. If applicable there is a fixed family allowance of 660 EUR per month and there is a possibility to

get an allowance for special needs<sup>68</sup>. There is also financial support for the hosting institutions in the form of a monthly contribution of 1,000 EUR to research training and networking and a one-time contribution of 650 EUR for management and indirect costs.

Granted funds are distributed exclusively by the host institutions, which had to sign fellowship contracts with Campus France. These contracts set the fellowship implementation procedures, reporting obligations and the timeline, and amounts of the payments to be made by Campus France to the host institution based on the researcher profile. The salary allowances are transferred to the host institutions as a gross amount, including both employer and employee contributions and taxes. The mobility and family

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68 The special needs allowance contributes to the additional costs for the acquisition of special items and services for researchers with disabilities, whose long-term physical, mental, intellectual or sensory impairments are certified by a competent national authority, and are of such nature that their participation in the action may not be possible without adequate support (e.g., assistance by third persons, adaptation of work environment, additional travel/transportation costs). These special needs items or services must not have been funded from another source (e.g., social security or health insurance).



allowances can be paid to the researchers separately or as part of the salary as a living allowance (subject to deductions), depending on national and host institution's rules. The special needs allowance is paid to the host institution as an actual cost upon receipt of supporting documents. There is no country correction coefficient within the SAFE project, i.e. fellowships' amounts are the same regardless of the EU country in which the host institution is based.

Associated partners helped especially with spreading awareness of the project. On the project website there is useful information and links to other supporting schemes and/or organisations for researchers and scholars at risk, for example [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions \(MSCA\)](#), [EURAXESS—Science4refugees](#), [Scholars at Risk](#) and [others](#).

## Target groups and conditions

The following section refers to the target group and conditions of the SAFE Call for applications, launched on 18 November 2024 and closed on 20 January 2025. A total of 56 applicants were selected to commence their fellowship.

### Eligibility criteria

There are two main target groups for the beneficiaries of the fellowships: 'Track 1' is for at-risk researchers currently outside the EU (with no refugee/protection status)<sup>69</sup> and 'Track 2' is for at-risk researchers already within the EU (with refugee/protection/temporary status).

Eligibility criteria of the November 2024 call stipulated that the candidates:

- A) must be Doctoral/PhD candidates or Postdoctoral researchers,
- B) must have the necessary language skills to successfully conduct their research project,
- C) must not hold EU citizenship and
- D) must face or have faced qualifying risks.

Also, an ethics checklist<sup>70</sup> had to be submitted with the application.

Criteria A stated that Postdoctoral researchers who have successfully defended their PhD/doctoral thesis but who have not yet formally been awarded the PhD/doctoral degree were also considered eligible to apply<sup>71</sup>. If the applicant had started PhD/doctoral studies abroad but had to interrupt them or if they were enrolled in a PhD/doctoral programme at the time of the application they could still apply but they had to be able to provide evidence that they had started a PhD/doctoral research project.

Criteria B stated that researchers must have the language skills necessary to successfully conduct their research activities at the potential host institution. It was the responsibility of the host institution to check that a candidate has the necessary language skills. Language certificates were not required for an application, but it was up to the host institution to decide whether to request official certificates from their candidate.

Criteria C stated that in general, researchers with recognised refugee status in the EU may be permitted to conduct their research projects only at host institutions located in the EU Member State where they were granted that status. When

<sup>69</sup> Preparing all the necessary documents in three months was a challenge for many. In the case of a regularly recurring call, applicants would already know what to prepare for. However, there will still be the problem of destroyed documents and non-functioning offices in conflict-affected zones.

<sup>70</sup> A form is provided and the EU has published guidance: [‘How to complete your ethics self-assessment’](#).

<sup>71</sup> The successful defence must be unconditional (no further requirements/corrections that need to be addressed) and take place before the call deadline.

applying, host organisations had to ensure that the researcher's residence status in the EU allows them to conduct the proposed project at their institution. The status of a recipient of international protection (i.e. refugee/subsidiary protection) had to have been granted by the time of application.

Criteria D stated that researchers at risk within the scope of the SAFE project included those who face threats to their life, personal freedom, or research career, or who have been forced to flee because of such threats. Risk may arise from factors such as: general circumstances (e.g. armed conflict, civil unrest, low level of academic freedom); researcher's academic work, actions and/or associations (e.g. due to their field of research, or due to their involvement in political, civic, or social activities grounded in liberal and democratic principles, or due to their associations with similarly threatened individuals or groups); researcher's personal identity (e.g. their ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, or religious beliefs).

As part of the application process, researchers were required to provide their potential host institution with detailed information about their risk situation, including a personal testimony supported by relevant documentation. The host institution would then outline the candidate's risk circumstances in the risk description form, a mandatory component of the application. While evidence of risk was not compulsory, applicants had the option to submit supporting documentation, such as dismissal notices, court summonses, imprisonment records, credible written threats, records of censorship attempts, social media posts related to personal activism, documents detailing specific incidents, statements from humanitarian organisations, witness testimonies, reports or news articles from reputable sources on relevant conflicts, or official evacuation orders. For researchers already granted official international protection status, this was also recognised as objective evidence of their risk situation.

Eligible host institutions included academic or non-academic higher education and research organisations based in an EU Member State. An academic organisation was defined as a public or private higher education establishment awarding academic degrees, or a public or private non-profit research organisation whose primary objective is to conduct research or technological development. A non-academic organisation referred to any socio-economic entity outside the academic sector.

Both researchers and host institutions could access an eligibility and risk questionnaire on the project website as a preparatory tool before submitting an application<sup>72</sup>. Applications had to be submitted by the host institution on behalf of the researcher, with only one application permitted per institution for a single researcher. Each application required the signature of the institution's head. It should be noted that applications were to be submitted at the university level, rather than by individual institutes or departments.

## Profiles of researchers supported

The programme is open to all fields of research and innovation, with the requirement that any employment contract funded by a SAFE fellowship must be on a full-time basis. While there is no specific demographic focus, the programme aimed to achieve a gender-balanced selection process of the call for researchers.

In the original EU call for proposals, applying organisations were strongly encouraged to implement a gender equality plan or incorporate gender-related considerations into their institutional practices. This included fostering gender balance in leadership and decision-making roles, as well as in recruitment and career progression. Organisations were also advised to consider the gender dimension when selecting researchers for the programme.

During the application process, researchers who wanted to receive an additional allowance to

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72 At the time of publishing the questionnaire was no longer available online.

support family needs were required to indicate whether family members would accompany them. This matter was also addressed in the hosting plan.

## Results of the 2025 open call

The [results of the SAFE Call for applications](#), launched on 18 November 2024 and closed on 20 January, have been published on the website of the SAFE project. During this pilot project out of 359 applicants, a total of 56 fellows from 15 countries are being supported to continue their work in 13 EU Member States. The top host countries of the selected researchers are Germany, France and Italy<sup>73</sup>.

A total of 44 of the selected fellows are postdoctoral researchers while 12 are doctoral candidates. There are 32 female researchers, 23 male researchers and 1 is a non-binary researcher.

Of the awarded fellows, 27 researchers at risk applied from outside the EU (Track 1) while 29 fellowships were awarded to researchers who are already in the EU (Track 2).

The main disciplines of the selected fellows are law, economics and social science, language and cultural studies, mathematics and natural sciences, and engineering.

# Application and selection process of the 2024 call for researchers

## Recruitment process

The project's website, description, application forms, and related materials are currently available exclusively in English. Detailed guidance on the required application documents was provided in the Terms of Reference for Applicants, and checklists were made available to assist candidates throughout the process. According to online sources, the project has been promoted through the consortium members and their partners, as well as via the Research Executive Agency's (REA) communication channels. Those interested in receiving updates can subscribe to a dedicated newsletter for the latest information.

## Application procedure

The entire application process, along with all guidelines and supporting documents, was

conducted exclusively in English. As previously noted, researchers were unable to apply for the grant independently; instead, applications could only be submitted by the host institution on behalf of their proposed collaboration, using an online form.

Researchers interested in participating in the scheme had two options: they could either contact potential host institutions directly or utilise the matchmaking service provided. This service was specifically designed to connect researchers and host institutions that had not yet identified a partner for their application. To access the matchmaking service, both researchers and host institutions were required to complete an online profile<sup>74</sup>. Researchers faced an additional step—passing an eligibility check—and once this was cleared, they could proceed to complete their profile and begin the matching process.

<sup>73</sup> Other countries are Belgium, Bulgaria, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, The Netherlands, Poland, and Spain.

<sup>74</sup> Researchers had to fill in contact information, education level, language skills, risk statement, CV, publications, research abstracts, and placement preferences in their expression of interest. Host institutions had to fill in information on their institution, research areas available, language requirements for hosting, and other requirements.

During this phase, the submitted data underwent cleaning and validation. Matches were then generated based on criteria such as academic field, research level, preferred host country, language requirements, and any additional, manually specified criteria. Host institutions could access the matchmaking platform to review anonymised profiles of potential candidates and request further information if needed. If a host institution identifies a suitable candidate, they could preselect the researcher and conduct an online interview. Upon a successful match, the two parties would then collaborate as partners to finalise and submit their joint application.

To ensure the institution was on board as a whole and to ensure that there was only one application per institution, the head of the host institution had to endorse the application, sign the hosting plan and provide the contact details. The person responsible for the application on behalf of the institution had to be identified and employed by the institution, because that person was the main contact point during the selection process.

For the [application](#), documents had to be submitted according to the selection criteria (see next section) and all relevant forms had to be included. The following documents were required for applying and can be divided into categories:

A) General documents: online application, data processing consent form (F), copy of ID or passport (including the accompanying family), copy of current residence permit (if applicable);

B) Documents relating to the ‘Excellence’ evaluation criterion: motivation letter, curriculum vitae, list of publications (for PhD applicants this was optional), selection of up to three of the most important publications (for Ph.D. applicants this was optional), external assessment letter (F, sent separately), academic certificates;

C) Documents relating to the ‘Implementation’ evaluation criterion: detailed statement by

the academic supervisor/mentor at the host institution, research proposal, time plan, detailed hosting plan (F), ethics self-assessment form (F);

D) Documents relating to the ‘Impact’ evaluation criterion: risk description form (F), supporting evidence (if available).

The academic supervisor or mentor was responsible for conducting an interview with the candidate before the application was submitted. They were required to provide a confidential statement assessing the candidate’s academic profile and research project as part of the application. Additionally, they had to assist the researcher in completing the ethics self-assessment, working alongside the institution’s designated ethics contact (whose details were included in the application). In the event of a successful application, the supervisor or mentor would serve as the primary point of support throughout the research project, ensuring the candidate had access to the necessary workspace.

A critical component of the application process was the external assessment letter, which had to be written by a professor in the same academic field as the proposed research project<sup>75</sup>. This professor had to be affiliated with an academic or non-academic research institution within the EU. The hosting plan provided a detailed overview of the proposed administrative, academic, personal, and social support measures, as well as a post-fellowship strategy.

Each SAFE project application was required to comply with national and EU ethics regulations for research, while also aligning with EU policy priorities, including environmental, social, security, and industrial objectives.

## Selection criteria

The selection criteria for the programme were based on four key areas: general eligibility, excellence, implementation, and impact. Following

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75 This letter had to come from a different institution, and it could not be the candidate-researcher’s supervisor/mentor.

the application deadline, the first step involved an eligibility check, which assessed the completeness of each application and verified compliance with the general eligibility requirements. Applications that successfully passed this initial stage proceeded to step two, which was a preliminary assessment. This step was only implemented if the ratio of applications to available fellowships exceeds 2:1 and it was conducted based on the established selection criteria.

In the end, 359 applicants competed for up to 60 fellowships, so the preliminary assessment was applied. DAAD prepared an initial ranking of all applications, and the top 120 applications were then forwarded to external reviewers for further evaluation.

Step three involved an external evaluation based on the selection criteria. Each application was independently assessed by two academic experts and one regional expert.

Step four was the final selection, carried out by an expert selection committee. The committee's decision-making process was informed by the external evaluations. The committee comprises members with collective expertise in science, academia, research management, policy, risk assessment, and regional knowledge, and included ethics advisers. Additionally, the SAFE Coordinating Committee—consisting of senior representatives from the implementing partners—participated in the final selection meeting.

In step five, the results were published. Institutions with selected applicants were given two weeks to accept the funding offer; failure to respond within this period resulted in the withdrawal of the offer. Institutions on the reserve list also had two weeks to confirm their continued interest. Once accepted, selected institutions received a fellowship agreement from Campus France, outlining the financial arrangements,

payment schedules, and reporting obligations. The agreement included annexes detailing the applicable rules and regulations<sup>76</sup>.

In step three of the evaluation process, reviewers documented their assessments using a structured evaluation form. This form included both a written evaluation and a numerical score assigned to the specific subcriteria of excellence, implementation, and impact. Reviewers were also required to identify any elements within the application that might raise concerns and necessitate further examination.

Each application could achieve a maximum score of 100 points. If the assessments by the two academic reviewers differed by more than 15 points in total or by more than 5 points for any individual criterion—specifically for criterion 1 (Excellence) and criterion 2 (Implementation)—a third external expert was consulted to provide an additional review. The final score for these criteria was determined by calculating the mean of the two closest assessments.<sup>77</sup>

To advance in the selection process, applications were required to meet a minimum threshold: at least 60% of the maximum points for each criterion and an overall score of at least 60 points. Applications that failed to meet these benchmarks were excluded from further consideration.

The risk situation of the researchers, evaluated under the Impact criterion, was assessed by regional experts. Their evaluation considered several key aspects: the particular reasons why the researcher was at risk, the extent and nature of the threats and consequences they had faced, and the severity of their situation. Severity was further divided into two tracks: Track 1 examined whether the candidate remained in the country where the risk existed or had managed to flee, while Track 2 assessed how long the candidate had been in the EU, their residency status, and the

76 For example, the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, Open Science Statement, EU Visibility Guidelines, as well as templates for narrative and financial reporting.

77 In cases where three assessments were conducted, the final score was calculated using the mean of the two closest assessments, excluding the third, or 'outlier', assessment to ensure fair and equitable treatment of all applications.

validity period of that status. The availability of supporting evidence was also taken into account.

The quality of the hosting plan was another critical aspect of the evaluation, focusing on the level of support the host institution pledged to provide. This includes an assessment of working conditions and administrative support, such as assistance with visas, accommodation, family services, mental health, and language support. Academic support is also evaluated, encompassing supervision, peer networks, and mentoring programmes. Additionally, the post-fellowship plan is scrutinised for its provisions regarding career development opportunities, financial support, and concrete arrangements for securing academic or non-academic opportunities following the fellowship. The host institution's commitment to offering post-fellowship employment or funding was also considered.

This approach aligns with the findings of the Inspireurope Project's final report, [Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe's Response](#), which underscores the importance of comprehensive support to facilitate a smooth transition for at-risk researchers. Such support combines practical assistance with administrative and visa procedures, trauma counselling, psychological follow-up, language tuition, academic training, and career planning. By incorporating a post-fellowship plan into the selection criteria, the process prioritises applications that demonstrate sustainability and a long-term commitment to the researcher's future.

## Transparency and fairness

The evaluation of applications was conducted through an open call for external experts, including both academic and regional specialists. To qualify as an academic reviewer, candidates were required to hold a position as a full-time professor at a higher education institution, a junior or tenure-track professor, or a senior scientist or junior research group leader at a non-university research institution or equivalent organisation. For the evaluation of PhD applicants, even full-time

or part-time academic staff at universities, higher education institutions, research organisations, or similar bodies—provided they hold a doctoral degree and possess a higher academic qualification than the candidate being assessed—were eligible to apply.

Regional experts were expected to meet the same academic criteria or, alternatively, could be recognised specialists working in foundations, ministries, or university and research administration. These experts were required to demonstrate proven regional knowledge and expertise in human rights law frameworks, as well as an understanding of the political, cultural, and socioeconomic dynamics relevant to their area of specialisation.

All reviewers, regardless of their background, were required to have international experience, excellent command of English, and a track record of supervising foreign students and researchers or participating in international cooperation projects.

Academic reviewers focused on conducting a subject-specific assessment of the applications, as well as evaluating the hosting plan proposed by the applicant institution for the researcher. Regional reviewers, with their specialised knowledge of human rights frameworks and political and social dynamics, were responsible for assessing the risk situation of the candidate.

It is important to note that reviewers worked on a voluntary basis, receiving no payment for their evaluations. Evaluators were explicitly committed to conducting the selection process in a non-discriminatory manner. When assessing a candidate's excellence, particular attention was given to factors such as gender, health impairments, care responsibilities, or employment dependencies. Reviewers were required to consider whether any of these circumstances had adversely affected the candidate's academic performance, the duration of their studies, or their ability to participate in extracurricular activities.



To ensure objectivity and adherence to the selection criteria, reviewers were prohibited from assessing applications submitted by their own institutions. If a reviewer discovered that they had been assigned an application from an individual with whom they shared a personal or professional relationship, they were obligated to immediately disclose this conflict to DAAD. The application in question would then be reassigned to another reviewer. By completing the evaluation form, each reviewer formally declared their impartiality.

Additionally, DAAD aimed, where possible, to achieve gender balance in the appointment of reviewers.

Applicants who believed an error had occurred in the evaluation process were entitled to submit a request for redress. This request has to be made within two weeks of receiving the selection results and would be reviewed by the SAFE Coordinating Committee.

## Types of support provided

In addition to the direct financial benefits described above, host institutions can provide researchers with additional funding to support the researcher's project and stay, which should have been outlined in the Hosting plan.

As mentioned above the hosting institutions were obliged to provide detailed information on the administrative and practical support measures planned for the researcher at the host institution. The exact scope was not set but the provided measures were evaluated during the application process. Minimum standards were declared in the application, and it was not possible to apply without ensuring the following:

A) Providing assistance to the researcher in obtaining the necessary visas, residence permits, and any required documentation for their research stay offering comprehensive support in all practical matters related to the researcher's travel to, and stay in, the host country, and if necessary, acting as an intermediary between the researcher and the relevant authorities

B) Signing an employment contract with the researcher with full social security coverage and providing the necessary resources and facilities

(such as a laboratory, workplace, or equivalent) for the successful execution of the project, as well as paying the researcher according to the salary scale applicable to the SAFE project and agreeing to offer the candidate any required information and assistance to ensure full compliance with relevant labour laws

C) Allocating part of the institutional contribution for research training and networking to ensure the participation of the researcher and/or representatives of the host institution in events organised within the framework of the SAFE project.

The specific scope of the assistance provided always depended on the specific grant application submitted. This assistance could include: helping with traveling to the host country, navigating official procedures and finding accommodation, as well as access to medical support and mental health support services, language training, and support with the researcher's social integration within the institution. Where applicable, the hosting institution had to outline in the application any family support services that were available to the researcher's family.



## Monitoring and evaluation

As outlined in the initial call, the consortium is responsible for establishing comprehensive monitoring and evaluation frameworks. These include defining performance metrics to measure the programme's success, implementing feedback mechanisms to gather and act on participant input, and conducting impact assessments to evaluate the long-term effects on participants. At present, no interim evaluation has been published, with the consortium expected to propose detailed monitoring and evaluation grids by the conclusion of the pilot phase.

There is no other programme of this scale dedicated to researchers at risk, although there are national schemes helping researchers (led for example by the consortium members), Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), and initiatives of individual organisations. According to the survey conducted

for the Inspireurope Project<sup>78</sup> (confirmed by researchers, support organisations, and host institutions), the high level of competitiveness of the European research programmes and positions is an obstacle for applying to EU programmes. For instance, 81% of hosts report this competitiveness as a potential obstacle, while in 2019, MSCA individual fellowships had an overall success rate of 14% and the European Research Council (ERC) [Starting Grant](#) for talented early-career scientists consolidated and advanced grants a success rate of 12%. This highlights how difficult it is to win a grant, even for those who have worked their entire research lives within well-resourced, stable institutions in stable countries. In light of this, the SAFE scheme gives a much bigger chance to researchers at risk as it is a fellowship programme dedicated only to them.

## Challenges and limitations

In the 2025 application round, host institutions who wanted to cooperate with researchers still outside of the EU had issues with the timeline of the application process. They had only three months to compile all the necessary papers to apply. In conflict zones, administration does not always work very smoothly and also some documents might have been destroyed or lost.

SAFE is a pilot project, so the main limitation is that it is a 'one time only' programme. From the author's point of view, to be able to fund 56 fellowships guaranteeing full-time employment for up to 24 months is quite generous, but it needs to be a recurring call to be able to cover the demand for this type of funding.

The selection process, which spanned approximately four months, involved a demanding application procedure and time-consuming bureaucratic requirements for all parties involved. However, limiting the number of applications per institution and encouraging thorough internal preparation helped ensure that participating academic and research institutions were fully committed and well-equipped to provide researchers with the necessary assistance and support.

It is too early to assess whether the support scheme achieves what it states in its objectives. The implementation of the respective fellowships just started so it would be necessary to review the evaluation in the later stage of the project and after its finalisation.

78 European University Association (EUA), Stoeber, H., Gaebel, M. and Morrisroe, A., [Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe's Response](#), Inspireurope – Initiative to Support, Promote and Integrate Researchers at Risk in Europe, 2020.

# Replicating the European pilot action for at-risk artists and culture professionals

A similar pilot action for artists at risk is very much needed and the European Call<sup>79</sup> for a Preparatory Action-European Fellowship Scheme for Researchers at Risk action could be replicated. The report *Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe's Response*<sup>80</sup> highlights that the most pressing issues for researchers at risk when relocating is career guidance for post placement employment (43%), better funding or salary conditions (14%) and the need for legal support (12%). For the host institutions it is the need for the additional funding to host researchers at risk (83%), support at national or European policy levels (60%), and support from higher education institutions' leadership (50%).

By comparison, evaluating an academic researcher's CV, publications, or credentials may be more straightforward than assessing the quality of an artist's career trajectory, which can include varied forms of education—if any—and notions of 'professionalism'. In this programme, researchers were required to maintain active affiliation with academic or research institutions, a condition that significantly simplified the verification of their credentials<sup>81</sup>. Host institutions also served as essential guarantors of the researchers' academic standards.

The host institutions in the SAFE programme are required to guarantee that each researcher meets the eligibility criteria, possesses sufficient language skills, and has undergone an interview. They also have to confirm that the researcher does not hold EU citizenship (for example, in cases of dual nationality), and that all submitted documents and information has been thoroughly

reviewed. Additionally, the host institution has to ensure that the researcher possesses—or would be assisted in obtaining—all necessary travel documents for entry into the host country in time for the fellowship's start date. Alternatively, the host institution needs to confirm, to the best of its knowledge, that the researcher's residence status in the EU permits them to undertake the proposed project at the specified time, in full compliance with both EU and national residence laws. Finally, they need to attest that the candidate is not currently undergoing refugee proceedings and that no known factors would disqualify them from receiving the fellowship.

Only institutions—rather than individuals—may submit applications. This approach enhances the programme's effectiveness within academic and research sectors, where institutions typically possess robust bureaucratic structures capable of providing researchers with the necessary administrative and logistical support. Arts and cultural organisations often lack the same operational capacities as universities and research institutes. Unlike their academic counterparts, many of these organisations do not have dedicated Human Resources departments or the administrative infrastructure required to facilitate the arrival, relocation, and integration of at-risk third-country nationals and their families. The small-scale and fragmented nature of the CCI sector, as well as the precarity of not-for-profit operators, suggests that joint approaches or consortium-based operational models may be necessary to ensure these organisations can effectively implement similar initiatives.

79 EU Funding & Tenders Portal, Call [PPPA-RI-2023-FELLOWSHIPS-RR](#).

80 European University Association (EUA), Stoeber, H., Gaebel, M. and Morrisroe, A., [Researchers at Risk: Mapping Europe's Response](#).

81 Artistic research and practice-based research conducted within academic environments are not uniformly recognised or established across all EU Member States. This inconsistency may limit opportunities for eligible artists in the academic world or introduce additional barriers for those who might otherwise qualify for support.

Respected cultural institutions could act as guarantors and curators in the selection process. They could submit applications on behalf of artists, supported by external assessment letters that confirm their excellence, much like the obligations placed on host institutions for researchers. There might be a challenge when trying to define ‘respected’ arts institutions but the evaluators of the applications would be experts in the field, so they would be able to assess the status of individual host institutions<sup>82</sup>.

The primary challenge in replicating this programme likely lies in the management of residency permits. The EU and its Member States have been working to streamline these processes in order to attract global research talent. In recent years, tailored visa and residence initiatives have expanded significantly, in order to reduce bureaucratic hurdles, expedite entry procedures, and provide long-term stability for researchers<sup>83</sup>. Additionally, the [EURAXESS](#) national information

portal offers country-specific guidance on entry conditions, visa procedures, and support services.

While most at-risk researchers enter Europe through a researcher or scientific visa—typically a long-stay visa based on a ‘hosting agreement’ with a higher education or research institution—no equivalent effort has been made for artists and culture professionals from third countries<sup>84</sup>.

Replicating the requirement for full-time employment could also prove challenging, as it may limit the pool of eligible applicants (both artists and cultural organisations). In many artistic professions full-time employment is standard, while for others it could take the form of an artist residency under an employment contract. Alternatively, a stipend-based approach would allow support for freelance or self-employed artists. Regardless of the operational details, it is essential to emphasise the need for a similarly systematic approach to address the plight of artists at risk.

#### Acknowledgements to interviewee (including via email)

Lenka Procházková, head of the Czech Liaison Office for Education and Research in Brussels,  
Czech National Agency for International Education and Research

82 This can be seen in practice with European programmes such as [Culture Moves Europe](#), [Perform Europe](#), and more.

83 The [EU Immigration Portal](#) is an online resource that provides practical information on both EU-wide and national immigration rules, tailored to different types of professionals, including researchers. It offers detailed, country-specific guidance on admission requirements, necessary documents, and application procedures. Available in multiple languages, the portal serves as a comprehensive and user-friendly guide for navigating the immigration process across the EU.

84 While the rights afforded under scientific/researcher visas vary across EU Member States, in most countries there are provisions for family members to join the researcher. The relevant EU directive addressing the mobility of third-country researchers is the [Directive \(EU\) 2016/801](#).

# Annex: Evaluation criteria in detail

## 1. Excellence (up to 35 points)

*The following subcriteria will be considered to assess the academic excellence of each candidate-researcher:*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <p>1.1. Academic achievements (quality and type of studies and research, general average grade, grade development, duration of studies) and, especially for postdoctoral candidates, academic career to date</p> <p>1.2. Number and quality of peer-reviewed publications, reports, studies, and others</p> | <p>1.3. Motivation: academic, professional and personal reasons for the proposed project</p> <p>1.4. External assessment letter</p> <p>1.5. Other achievements (e.g. patents, lectures, conference participation, prizes, additional scientific or practical skills, etc.)</p> |
|---|--|

## 2. Implementation (up to 30 points)

*The following subcriteria will be considered to assess the implementation quality of the project, in terms of research proposal and hosting plan for the researcher:*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>2.1. Quality of the research proposal (up to 15 points)</p> <p>2.1.1. Quality of research project and preparation (originality, topicality and relevance of the project)</p> <p>2.1.2. Quality of supervisor/mentor statement, suitability of choice of host institution and academic supervisor/mentor</p> <p>2.1.3. Feasibility and consistency of work plan and schedule</p> <p>2.1.4. Significance of the research project and planned stay in the host country for the researcher's academic, professional and personal development</p> <p>2.2. Quality of the hosting plan (up to 15 points)</p> <p>2.2.1. Working conditions as well as administrative support and practical support included in hosting plan (e.g. family, mental health, language support, etc.)</p> | <p>2.2.2. Academic support included in the hosting plan (e.g. supervisor's support, peer support, mentoring programs, etc.)</p> <p>2.2.3. Academic responsibilities/outputs contemplated (teaching activities, studies/papers published, contribution to ongoing projects, etc.)</p> <p>2.2.4. Opportunities for networking and exchange at national and international level</p> <p>2.2.5. Post-fellowship plan: Opportunities for career development, financial support, and any arrangements contemplated for securing successful academic or non-academic opportunities after the fellowship; quality of commitment (if any) of the host institution to providing concrete post-fellowship employment or funding</p> <p>2.2.6. Opportunities for fostering open science, innovation and entrepreneurship (as appropriate)</p> |
|--|--|

### 3. Impact (up to 35 points)

*This criterion refers to the situation of risk specific to the researcher and is assessed on the basis of the information provided by the host institution in the risk description form and on additional evidence, if available. The following subcriteria and, where available, supporting documentation will be considered:*

3.1. Particularity of risk experienced: Is the risk faced by the researcher of a general or situational nature, such as due to armed conflict in his/her home country? Is the risk more specific to the researcher, perhaps arising from his/her academic pursuits, research topics, or personal actions related to civic or political engagement? Does the risk stem from the researcher's personal characteristics such as his/her ethnic, sexual, gender identity or religious beliefs?

3.2. Quality/extent of risk experienced: What forms of repercussions has the researcher experienced, or is he/she expected to experience? Examples may include the loss of academic positions or privileges, censorship, surveillance, travel restrictions, harassment, unfair prosecution, imprisonment, specific threats to life, torture, and other forms of physical violence.

3.3. Severity of risk experienced: Is the researcher currently exposed to this risk, or has he/she been able to flee? If so, does he/she face the possibility of having to return to the location of risk e.g. because of a temporary residence permit that will not be extended? If the researcher is in an EU Member State, what type of residence permit does he/she have and how long is it valid?

3.4. Evidence of risk: Are there any clear, objective proofs of a past or ongoing risk situation for the researcher? Such evidence may include dismissal notices, court summonses, imprisonment records, credible written threats, censorship attempts, social media posts related to personal activism, medical or legal documents detailing specific incidents, supporting documentation from humanitarian organisations, witness statements, reports and news articles from reliable journals on relevant conflicts, official evacuation orders, etc. The official recognition of a protection status is also considered objective evidence of the risk situation.

# CHAPTER 11

## Towards a Systemic Shift: Setting Standards for the Protection of Artists at Risk

by Yamam Al-Zubaidi

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**In 1980, the General Conference of UNESCO adopted a Recommendation concerning the Status of the Artist<sup>85</sup>, which has served as a global framework aimed at improving the conditions for artists for forty-five years. This recommendation addresses various issues, including the freedom of expression for artists, as well as their working conditions and social and economic rights.**

The Recommendation calls upon Member States and other relevant stakeholders—such as non-governmental organisations and the private sector—to develop and implement policies, measures, and initiatives that address a wide range of topics. It is not limited to traditional concerns like employment, social security, and artistic expression, instead, it takes a holistic approach, covering areas such as training, mobility, and gender equality.

By setting standards for the protection of artistic communities, the Recommendation has significantly influenced the development of national frameworks designed to enhance the status of artists and improve their working conditions, among other aspects.

On the other hand, the fifth and most recent global consultation regarding the implementation of the Recommendation highlights a significant shift in the social reality. It notes that nationalism and authoritarianism appear to be on the rise, leading to conflicts and causing ‘global trauma.’<sup>86</sup> The consultation describes the situation of artists as ‘deeply alarming.’ Attempts to silence dissent and limit freedom of expression seem to be on the rise across the world and are becoming a permanent feature of the social reality, undermining the fundamental principles of international law, particularly international human rights law.

Artists, alongside journalists, are becoming prime targets for censorship, violence, and legal persecution. An increasing number of artists are either voluntarily or involuntarily displaced, fleeing censorship, persecution, and even threats to their lives. It is not unfair to say that artists at risk and displaced artists are among the first and direct casualties of this global trauma.

The international community has acknowledged the emerging challenges faced by journalists by adopting the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity.<sup>87</sup> The Plan, a result of a process that took roughly two years, was backed by resolutions from the General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, and UNESCO. In contrast, there is currently no comparable global framework to protect artists in emergencies, even as such emergencies appear to be becoming a persistent aspect of the current global landscape.

The absence of an international normative framework for the protection of artists in emergencies has been widely acknowledged. Recently, UNESCO has taken steps to learn from the UN plan that addresses the situations of journalists, specifically highlighting the differences between the challenges faced by journalists and those faced by artists.<sup>88</sup> In this context, UNESCO has explicitly called for greater feedback on the conditions of artists at risk.<sup>89</sup>

85 UNESCO, ‘[UNESCO and the Status of the Artist](#)’.

86 UNESCO, *Empowering Creativity. Implementing the UNESCO 1980 Recommendation Concerning the Status of the Artist*. UNESCO, 2023, p. 70.

87 UN, *UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity*, CI-12/CONF.202/6, 2012. More material is available to download from UNESCO, ‘[UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity](#)’.

88 Soraide, R., *Defending creative voices. Artists in emergencies – Learning from the safety of journalists*, UNESCO, 2023.

89 Ibid., p.11.



Produced by civil society organisations active in this area, and contributing a bottom-up perspective, these volumes were not explicitly designed as a response to UNESCO's above-mentioned call for feedback. Nevertheless, they

do help to deepen the understanding of the unique circumstances surrounding artists in crisis situations in complementarity with the key factors identified by UNESCO.

## Learning from practices

On the Move's research and action project on 'The Situation of At-Risk and Displaced Artists and Cultural Professionals', including the series of publications compiled in three volumes so far, attempts to outline the general patterns in existing support initiatives. To some extent, it also reveals recurring patterns in the approaches underpinning these initiatives.. However, it is important to review what we have learnt and consider whether we still need a normative framework for the protection of artists at risk. Or can a substantial shift be achieved by incremental improvements that address the identified shortcomings?

A review of relevant literature in this field, presented in the first volume of this research project<sup>90</sup>, has identified various challenges and shortcomings in the current approaches to the protection of artists in emergencies. The volume has also suggested a way to (re-)structure the debate on future initiatives to protect and support artists in emergencies. Instead of thinking in terms of recommendations for specific types of organisations involved, it is proposed that we think in terms of broader shifts in approaching the challenges. We are advised to address issues such as policy developments, structural and institutional shifts, and operational shifts, and focus on monitoring, documentation, and knowledge production. The message from

the literature review seems to be a call for a systemic shift.

The second volume<sup>91</sup>, focusing on the cultural policies in the European Union, has illustrated some of the shortcomings in the current support schemes for artists in emergencies, delivered across the Union. One such shortcoming is that initiatives are subject to the political priorities of political elites rather than the realities of artists in emergencies. Issues such as a lack of permanent and long-term approaches, the need to enhance the involvement of civil society, consulting the arts sector, and empowering grassroots actors are identified as essential factors for developing the relevant policies and initiatives. In this regard, the second volume echoes the reasoning in the literature review of the first volume mentioned above.

The common thread in both volumes can be understood as a call for a systemic shift in how initiatives to support and protect artists in emergencies are understood, perceived, planned, and delivered, both before and during their implementation.

This third volume<sup>92</sup> provides a bottom-up perspective, addressing the challenges on the ground. For instance, while the number of calls related to artists at risk has been growing in On the Move's database of international open

90 Yazaji, R., *The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals. Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition – Volume 1 Scoping Review*. On the Move, 2025.

91 Polivtseva, E. and Stambke, F., *The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals. Policy and Practice in the EU: Pathways, Impediments and Patchwork Solutions – Volume 2 Cultural Policy Analysis*. On the Move, 2025.

92 Floch, Y. (ed.), *Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies*. On the Move, 2025.

calls, access barriers remain, particularly with regards to visa support.<sup>93</sup> Interviews with key organisations providing support for artists at risk in the USA reveal that political shifts and instability affect the modes of funding.<sup>94</sup> A comparative analysis of two pivotal initiatives to support artists at risk in the USA and in Europe indicates that both initiatives struggle to ensure long-term funding despite having different approaches and priorities.<sup>95</sup> Another analysis of two European-based initiatives concludes that the future of supporting artists at risk is hybrid, due to its very nature, as it combines elements of practical and organisational elements with challenges related to safety, representation, and autonomy of the artists supported.<sup>96</sup> The last

point is emphasised in a self-critical reflection by an initiative based in Germany, pointing out that good intentions are not enough; there is a need for hosting organisations to adjust their usual work to handle the power imbalance in relation to the artists offered protection.<sup>97</sup>

The main takeaway from the third volume is not a criticism of the initiatives discussed; they are all making a valuable contribution to the situation of artists at-risk. Instead, the main conclusion is that at least some of the shortcomings identified can be understood as a reflection of the systemic preconditions in the field. Once again, what is needed is a systemic shift in the field; good intentions are not enough.

## Formulating standards

Certainly, one aspiration behind the current volumes of research is to document experiences of various actors in the field—national, international, public, private, and non-profit actors equally. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that the challenges of current approaches to protecting artists at risk and displaced artists are systemic, in the sense that the shape of existing support schemes, their design, and the outcome, largely—not marginally—depend on the underlying structures, processes, and relationships. Systemic challenges require a systemic response; consequently, the main lesson is that the lack of a normative binding framework for this field remains the challenge and, in many ways, a such a framework could facilitate a

substantial shift that could ensure adequate and relevant support schemes.

A standard-setting normative agreement at the international level is the most fruitful way forward, to ensure that artists at risk and displaced artists are supported in line with common standards, independently of the jurisdiction involved, the identity of the funders, the identity of the supporting organisations, and, last but not least, the identity of the artist.

Such an endeavour is not the task of one or two players in the field. Instead, what is urgently needed is an inclusive conversation on how such

93 Wilson, C. R., 'At-risk and Displaced Arts Workers: Analysing On the Move's Database of International Open Calls for Participation' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#). On the Move, 2025.

94 DeVlieg, M. A., 'Opening Our Minds: Including Incoming Artists in the Communities and Cultural Sector of the USA' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#). On the Move, 2025.

95 Kiulina, D., 'A Comparative Analysis of IIE Artist Protection Fund (United States of America) and PAUSE programme (France)' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#). On the Move, 2025.

96 Tamimi, F., 'A Comparative Analysis of State of the Art(ist) (Austria) and Rawabet (Europe) Programmes' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#). On the Move, 2025.

97 Stambke, F., 'Case Study: The Martin Roth Initiative's Funding in Germany Programme (Germany)' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#). On the Move, 2025.

a standard-setting, normative agreement can and should be shaped. To put it simply, international actors, states, funders, and organisations in the field representing, among others, the arts sector and the non-profit sector need to gather

their respective knowledge and experience and develop a set of general standards that would become the guiding principles for all kinds of protection initiatives targeting artists at risk and displaced artists.

## Creating the conditions

The need for standard-setting is underpinned by various factors. First, the rise of populist movements has given fuel to democratic backsliding, even in countries with, formally speaking, well-established liberal democracies, which has raised serious concerns about the long-held belief that freedom of artistic expression is safe under the frameworks of liberal democracy and the rule of law. Evidence suggests that significant threats to the safety of artists and their freedom of expression have transcended political borders and regimes. Although the form, intensity, and severity of these threats may vary across different regions in the world, they are not confined to specific countries, regions, or political arrangements. As a result, an increasing number of artists worldwide find themselves displaced, whether voluntarily or involuntarily, escaping (self-)censorship, persecution, and even violence in the worst-case scenarios. A global phenomenon can only be challenged with global standards.

Second, the ongoing genocide and ethnic cleansing in Palestine, including the attacks on and killing of Palestinian artists and cultural workers, has deepened once more the crisis of international law, its efficiency, and efficacy. Under current circumstances, the legitimacy of a call for internationally agreed standards may therefore seem to be disconnected from the reality on the ground. Nevertheless, if we are to take the defense of freedom of expression, including artistic freedom, and the protection of those engaged in artistic work seriously, abandoning international law is not the way forward. Instead, there is a need

to not only return to and strengthen international law, but also that international law responds to the reality on the ground.

Third, this current volume of *The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals* provides evidence that there is a critical mass of practices, experiences, and accumulated knowledge related to supporting artists under attack. Public, private, national, and international actors have been engaged in support schemes with a variety of approaches, geographies, and funding arrangements. Last but not least, the cultural sector and the non-profit sector have been engaged in the situation of artists under threat nationally and internationally, including engagement with the UN system.<sup>98</sup> These initiatives would be further supported with a standard-setting normative agreement.

The sector needs a standard-setting normative framework with a programmatic approach to reshape the current landscape of available support schemes for artists at risk and displaced artists. It will certainly not solve all the challenges, but it will inform the development of a holistic approach where persecuted artists, regardless of their personal circumstances, can be provided with protection shaped by the same set of general principles. Neither the identity of the persecuted artist nor the form, shape, or organisational structure under which support is provided should disproportionately impact the chances to survive as an artist.

98 Some examples are Artists at Risk (ARC)'s [Contribution to the Fourth Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review on Cuba](#) and [on Nicaragua](#).

It is high time to bring to the table international actors, states, the arts and cultural sector, and the non-profit sector to collectively elaborate on standards and principles that would potentially raise the funding, and, most importantly, create synergies to improve the protection of artists and cultural workers under attack, independently of the circumstances of the artist or the support-providing organisations involved.

In this regard, the UNESCO Recommendation, the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, and the work done on Sustainable Development Goals 2030, recognising the value of culture and arts as a common global good<sup>99</sup>, should serve as an inspiration to set standards for protecting those who ensure our common good continues to thrive.

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99 See UNESCO, '[Culture as a Global Public Good: Member States Rally for Culture as a Stand-Alone Goal in Post-2030 Agenda](#)'.

# CHAPTER 12

## A Comparative Analysis of the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme (Finland) and TEJA, Network of Cultural Spaces in Support of Emergency Situations (Spain)

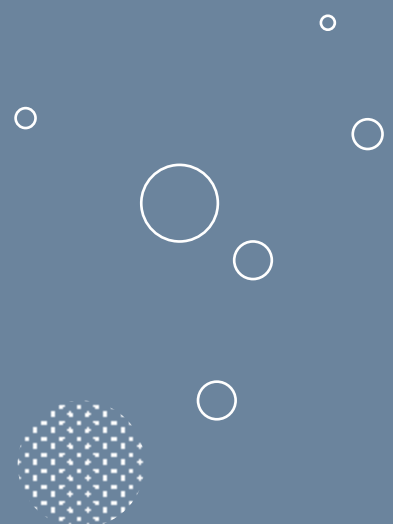
by Houari Bouchenak

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In response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Finnish organisations launched the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies in March 2022. This programme began modestly, pooling resources to host displaced Ukrainian artists and their families. It has since grown into a collaborative network, balancing flexibility with sustainability. In parallel, Spanish cultural actors established TEJA in May 2022 as a gesture of solidarity. Initially focused on Ukraine, TEJA soon extended its support to artists in Palestine and Iraq. Unlike Finland's residency model, TEJA functions as a dynamic network of institutions across Spain. Both initiatives aim to safeguard artistic practice while addressing urgent humanitarian needs. They highlight the role of cultural institutions in offering safe havens and fostering continuity. This comparative analysis explores their objectives, structures, challenges, and potential trajectories.

## Background

Following the mobilisation of a group of Finnish arts organisations with a desire to create momentum to support and assist Ukrainian artists during the early stages of the large-scale invasion of Ukraine, the [Ukrainian Solidarity Residencies Programme](#) for Ukrainian artists was launched in March 2022. When the residency programme was launched, it was modest, starting with five organisations that simply pooled their resources. In the first year, all the residencies involved provided free residency spaces. Everyone in the cultural network in Finland did everything they could to support the artists they were able to host. The current partners of the programme are: Archipelago Art Residency in Korpo ([AARK](#)), [Art Center Salmela](#), [Fairres](#), [Goethe-Institut Finland](#), Helsinki International Artist Programme ([HIAP](#)), [Nelimarkka Museum](#), [Pro Artibus Foundation](#), Shaulis Art House (SAH), The Finnish Illustration Association [Kuvittajat](#), the

Finnish [Ministry of Education and Culture](#) and the [Nordic Culture Point](#).

With very similar goals, the TEJA programme was initiated by three independent spaces in Madrid: [Nave Oporto](#), [Paisanaje](#), and Planta Alta ([hablarenarte](#)). It began as a gesture of solidarity from the artistic and cultural sector in response to the emergency triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and has since continued working with people and organisations in other emergency contexts, such as in Palestine and Iraq, forging new alliances and incorporating public and private organisations into the network. Today, the Network of Cultural Spaces in Support of Emergency Situations is made up of 15 public and private institutions and independent organisations from the cultural sector in Madrid, Barcelona, and Bilbao.

## Objectives

Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme offers residencies and accommodation for Ukrainian and Ukraine-based artists and art professionals that have been affected by the war in Ukraine. The aspirations of the collaboration are to

promote solidarity by establishing sustainable support networks and finding the means for Ukrainian artists to continue their practices. From the outset, the main objectives set by the network that was formed for this programme

were flexibility, longevity, and sustainability. They took as their model organisations that supported artists from conflict zones, but whose residencies were very short-term. The flexibility of the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme can be seen in the way in which the residences welcomed the artists, offering them, for example, the opportunity to bring their families with them without setting a time limit on their stay at the start of the programme. In the second year of the programme, they set a limit of 12 months for support for each artist. This is partly because once this period is over, social services take over. This allows artists to benefit more from social services and fully integrate into Finnish society. This programme brings together around 12 different organisations. There are six residency organisations, and the others are funding bodies or associations that support artists.

TEJA offers a residency programme in Spain for artists and cultural professionals from conflict zones. During their stay in Spain, residents receive accommodation, legal and psychological support, and access to a network of organisations and professionals with whom they can share, grow, and move forward with their creative projects. Their goal is to provide a safe and stimulating environment where artists can continue their work despite adverse circumstances, while also creating spaces for dialogue that ensure freedom of expression through collaborative activities, both in Spain and with international partners. Currently, one of the main focuses of the TEJA programme is the support provided to Palestinian artists by the staff of the host institutions, offering them the opportunity to be supported during their stay, both personally and artistically, so that they can regain stability and balance in their lives.

## Funding and resources

The Finnish network of organisations receives funding for the residency programme for Ukrainian artists from the Ministry of Arts and Culture, as well as various sources of private funding over the years. Currently, they are also funded by Nordic Culture Point, the Ministry of Arts and Culture, as well as small funds from certain artists' associations and the Goethe-Institut Finland. At the beginning of the programme, they received funds from private foundations, but they no longer have any private donors at this time.

TEJA has been sustained through the shared financial efforts of all the public and private institutions and independent organisations that make up the network. Since its founding, different fundraising methods have been implemented, ranging from specific donations from some of the participating institutions to solidarity sales of artworks donated by a group of artists. Currently, TEJA also receives essential support from the Spanish [Ministry of Culture](#).

## Target groups and conditions

One of the priorities of the members of the Ukraine Solidarity Residencies Programme network is to take into account the living conditions of artists, without taking expertise for granted and without imposing requirements regarding the nature or quality of artistic practice. Priority is given to artists belonging to minority groups, with no

requirements in terms of production of public sharing. The selection and allocation process for residencies is based on the suitability of the residency for the artist, as well as other factors, in order to place the artist in the residency that will be most beneficial to them.



TEJA currently targets Palestinian artists and cultural practitioners. Applicants can apply to an open call launched by the programme, which is simplified in terms of procedure and documentation required and which offers them a three-month residency. Applicants can be selected in different ways, depending on the quality of their work, the risk involved, or their first visa application. They may also be selected directly by the Ministry of Culture if there has

been previous collaboration between the Spanish Ministry and the Palestinian artist. There is also a third possibility for Palestinian artists to be selected, namely by an appointed Situated Agent who is detached from the network of Spanish associations and who is based in Palestine itself (in order to be as close as possible to the realities of the artists and to propose lists of participants to the TEJA network). These residencies are located in Barcelona, Madrid, and Bilbao.

## Types of support provided

The Ukraine Solidarity Residence programme offers residents accommodation and studios that vary depending on location and capacity, and the programme can host several artists at once to form a kind of integrated community. Other forms of support offered by the programme include networking events, artist talks, workshops, and events at HIAP and other venues in Helsinki and the surrounding areas, so that local communities can also get involved in the programme. Additionally, HIAP organises other events with these artists, such as open studios at least once a year. The organisations in the Ukraine Solidarity Residence programme network provide Ukrainian artists with a list of information resources and places where they can access mental health support and care services. Well-being workshops with group sessions are organised, with a focus on mental well-

being. These workshops are highly appreciated by participants.

Concerned about the mental health of Palestinian artists, TEJA also offers psychological support to its residents, but few request these therapeutic sessions. At the same time, TEJA offers Palestinian residents several forms of support, ranging from accommodation and a place for artistic creation, connections with the network of institutions and professionals in the art sector at the national and international level, and support from local agents to help artists find their bearings in Spain. It can be noted that TEJA's support begins with involvement in the evacuation process for Palestinian artists in emergency situations, and that the two programmes established in Spain and Finland provide artists with legal and financial assistance.

## Monitoring and evaluation

Once a year, the various organisations that are part of the Ukrainian Solidarity Residencies Programme network send a feedback form to Ukrainian artists in residence in order to gather information about their specific needs and areas for improvement, which the organisations then make available the following year. The form includes questions about the support provided by the residency programme and the programme coordinator, as well as open-

ended questions. This is a way of evaluating and adapting the programme to the context. Feedback is also gathered at events that are more accessible to a wider audience, which are organised in order to obtain in-depth information that would not otherwise be available, as well as allowing artists to get to know the different members of the community individually, which also has an impact on the nature of the feedback.

During the residencies organised by TEJA, the cultural managers accompanying the Palestinian artists continuously collect feedback from the artists at various stages of the residency process, taking into account the context and needs of each artist. This process requires the agents to

be more involved and attentive on a daily basis in order to gather and collect information relating to the artists' feedback. The TEJA organisations are keen to set up an evaluation process with the artists after the end of the residencies, so they can better meet the needs of artists in future editions.

## Challenges and limitations

For both programmes, resources are a constant challenge. In Finland, funding for the programme is significantly lower than it was after the first two years, but it has been maintained after the Ministry of Arts and Culture and the Nordic Cultural Point continued this programme for Ukrainian artists and artists from conflict zones. The organisations participating in the solidarity programme are keen to obtain additional funding to ensure the long-term viability of the project, but also to enable artists from other conflict zones to benefit from these residencies. Meetings between the heads of the organisations participating in the Finnish network have been organised for this purpose, and a request has been made to Nordic Culture Point to support other artists and to continue supporting former artists<sup>100</sup>. There is a limit to what these organisations in the Finnish network can plan in advance, as they do not have regular funding to rely on. The workload on staff is also heavy, as the programme has suffered budget cuts that have led to the suspension of 60% of jobs.

This workload is also evident in the small organisations that are part of the Spanish network. TEJA is made up of 15 organisations, including large institutions such as the [Reina Sofia Museum](#), [Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona \(MACBA\)](#) and [Casa de Velázquez](#), which enjoy high visibility, salaried staff and even a marketing team. However, the smaller associations or organisations—such as [Moving Artists](#), which has only two people, one

of whom is a volunteer—who take care of the association's activities, as well as setting up and monitoring some of the TEJA residencies, are under more pressure. There is an imbalance in terms of the size and profile of institutions, where the way in which these residences are managed and controlled inevitably differs.

TEJA operates with a small team of just two employees: a coordinator and a field agent. The coordinator faces a substantial workload, managing relationships and operations among the member organisations—a challenge similarly experienced by the coordinator of The Solidarity Programme for Ukrainian Artists. The field agent, currently an artist with firsthand experience of the programme's operational context, plays a crucial role on the ground. In Palestine, the field agent is an artist who previously worked for the Spanish Ministry of Culture for two years, fulfilling monitoring and mentoring roles. His deep familiarity with the local context in Palestine is invaluable. Beyond managing the call for applications, he also contributes to recommending artists for the TEJA residency programme. Both the coordinator and the local agent are subjected to significant emotional demands, which has led to a high level of emotional exhaustion—a challenge already evident in their roles.

It has been noted that there is also a gap between the time when funds are received, which is marked by delays, and the implementation and launch of TEJA programme residencies. The

<sup>100</sup> Many of the artists the network worked with for 12 months also received funding in Finland for one, two or even three years after their residency.

project sometimes starts before certain structures are properly in place or protocols are properly defined. This makes the project somewhat precarious, as it needs time to get organised before welcoming artists. Projects such as TEJA

are difficult to defend to the Spanish government, donors and founders. These projects are marked by the urgency of the context, so they require institutions to react quickly.

## Potential developments

The solidarity programme for Ukrainian artists, supported by the Finnish network, stands out for its flexibility, longevity and sustainability, according to Project Manager Dana Neilson, who believes these are the most important elements for the project's development and continuity. The network also ensures that they take the time to reassess and modify the programme according to the artists' needs. The maximum length of stay for Ukrainian artists in residence is still 12 months, but the situation is changing for several reasons, including: because far fewer people are applying for the residency programme; because many more people have left Ukraine and are living elsewhere; or because other artists are in Ukraine and wish to remain there. The length of the residency was previously quite long, but has now been reduced to three or six months, depending on the situation. There are currently six different residency hosts, located in different parts of Finland.

As part of the development and monitoring of this programme, monthly meetings are held between all organisations in the Finnish network. During the first two years, these meetings took place weekly, as the programme was new and the organisations needed to support each other due to their lack of experience working with artists in these circumstances. All decisions relating to the programme are taken by the entire network and not by a single person. This has also helped to build the project in a collaborative way. These meetings are a place of learning and sharing for the representatives of the organisations, which has been very beneficial for them both at the project level and on a personal level. This space creates closeness between people and organisations and helps to facilitate progress

through the different phases of the programme, thus ensuring the growth and continuation of the project. One development which is of particular interest is the sharing knowledge with different territories in order to promote learning and practice, which happened with the Swedish Artistic Residency Network ([SWAN](#)), the Estonian Artists' Association ([EAA](#)) and small organisations in six different countries, all of which have some experience of collaborating with Ukrainian artists, particularly during this period of conflict. HIAP also wishes to open up broader opportunities for collaboration outside Finland.

TEJA organisations are already considering how to maintain this momentum in the long term, with a desire to establish international collaborations with other organisations in multiple territories, particularly those territories that have artists considered to be at risk. However, some of the current challenges facing the institutions in the TEJA network, which is also linked to the geopolitical context in Palestine, is to ensure the evacuation of Palestinian artists and the smooth running of residencies and support for artists. This urgent action must be achieved while maintaining stability in terms of participation in network meetings and ensuring the visibility of actions, all with a very small team, many of whom are volunteers (in the case of the smaller organisations in the network).

It is still necessary for the organisations in the Finnish and Spanish networks to generate interest in these types of programmes, which remains a significant challenge, especially as general and media attention shifts elsewhere, making it difficult to maintain the interest of governments.

Finland and Spain provide significant support to people of Ukraine and Palestine respectively, which has prompted governments to fund the Ukrainian Solidarity Residencies Programme, TEJA, and other initiatives. However, the challenge remains to ensure the sustainability of such programmes once the political context has changed. TEJA and the Ukrainian Solidarity Residencies Programme were created with high expectations, in the sense that urgent action was needed to offer an alternative to evacuated artists, but this evacuation and residency process required significant funding. The alternative for sustaining this type of programme would be to increase collaboration with several organisations in different territories, resizing the scope and scale of projects, taking into account the time required.

In order to alleviate the emotional burden of the TEJA programme on its staff, Ixone Sádaba, Director and co-Founder of Moving Artists, suggests setting up a task rotation system, in which, every six or 12 months those involved in the project change positions. In her view, being part of a large network can be negative in some respects, as it can be more difficult to reach a consensus. Hence the rotation proposal, so that everyone can conserve their energy and maintain a clear view of the situation. Medical assistance and financial support for their staff is also essential in order to carry out the programme. Working for free for a long period of time has a negative impact on the stability of the lives and health of the staff of small associations. Residences are one thing, international protection and evacuations are another, and trying to manage all three at once is very difficult, says Sádaba.

In a programme such as TEJA, it is essential to consider having profiles of people specialising in administration, but also others with artistic experience, so that they can provide a clearer vision of the expectations of the Palestinian creatives being hosted. It would also be beneficial

to have a lawyer included in the team so that they can provide a legal perspective when dealing with various situations involving artists or institutions.

Ixone Sádaba says: ‘Experience is a legacy in itself. And we defend artistic practice without thinking about the object with the practice itself. It’s true, we consider that the legacy itself is something that is also very important to us. Art and culture in general can serve as a bridge, as an escape, and generally, people tend to see this in a negative light, but we think it’s a positive tool, that art can be used ... also as a tool for mobility, because once a person gets their first visa, it’s easier to get the second one.’

For Dana Neilson, the success of the Finnish residencies programme can be measured in tangible, concrete terms: the settlement of several Ukrainian families in the country. This demonstrates the current stability of these individuals and the possibility for artists to regain balance in their lives, and has been made possible mainly thanks to the longevity of the residency, which has played an important, even decisive, role. The fact that they offer not only a living and working space, but also a work grant or a means of subsistence. Another important factor in the success of this programme, as well as that of TEJA, is the open-mindedness of the community where the residency is located, which has welcomed and helped Ukrainian and Palestinian artists and their families in Finland and Spain. These programmes also enable the community to evolve and open up, as the residency is not seen as something fixed and closed, but rather as an integral part of the community, which gets involved by supporting the residents and offering them opportunities for integration. The community is not only linked to the people who are part of a territory, but also to the important role of the artistic community in the programmes, which stimulates sharing between the artist and the programme, thus contributing greatly to the latter’s success.

**Acknowledgements to interviewees**

Dana Neilson, Project Manager of the Ukrainian Solidarity Residencies Programme at Helsinki International Artist Programme (HIAP), Helsinki, Finland

Ixone Sádaba, Director and co-Founder of Moving Artists (MA), Bilbao, Spain

Johanna Fredriksson, Senior Advisor, Nordic Culture Point (Nordisk kulturkontakt), Helsinki, Finland



# CHAPTER 13

## Information Providers for At-risk and Displaced Arts Workers

by Claire Rosslyn Wilson

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This chapter explores some key areas of work, challenges and opportunities for organisations that provide practice information to at-risk and displaced arts workers. The need for such a chapter was highlighted by the work of [Mobility Information Points \(MIPs\)](#), a working group formed by On the Move member organisations who help artists and culture professionals with the administrative issues of cross-border mobility, through free information and consultation services. Some of the professionals of these MIPs provide information for and support to artists at risk and organisations that work with them.

The administrative hurdles that artists in general face during cross-border mobility can be significant. As was reported in [Voices of Culture report: status and working conditions for artists, cultural and creative professionals](#), a ‘widespread and common barrier to cultural/ artistic mobility across geographies and artforms is linked to the administrative processes of applying for funding, dealing with international taxation, travel, and accessing social services.’<sup>101</sup> This can be multiplied for at-risk and displaced arts workers, as they can have the additional challenge of irregular residency status or additional complexities when applying for visas. Some of the key issues the MIPs are consulted on include visas, social insurance, taxes, and customs, and these can be complicated when artists have temporary or irregular residency status.

It is worth highlighting that this chapter is **exploring the administrative challenges and needs of arts workers at risk and the ways**

**in which organisations can support these processes.** This means that the chapter discusses visas or residency permits that might define arts workers as being at risk, as these processes are what information mobility points can assist them with. However, navigating these administrative definitions does not mean that the work produced by these arts workers needs to be related to their residency status. Some of the other chapters in this series examine how arts workers at risk might feel pressured into making work linked to their personal experiences of risk or that their identity becomes entwined with this experience in ways they are not comfortable with.<sup>102</sup> Therefore, it is important to keep in mind that the discussions below are about the administrative process and definition, not the artwork itself.

This chapter, then, started with the question: what information is most necessary for at-risk or displaced arts workers and how best can information providers deliver it?

## Methodology

This article is based on group discussions held in July and August 2025 with a group of representatives from the MIPs, including [Cultuurloket](#) (Belgium), [MobiCulture](#) (France), [touring artists](#) (Germany), [CzechMobility.Info](#) (Czech Republic), [Loja Lisboa Cultura](#) (Portugal), [Tamizdat](#) (USA), and [Arts Infopoint UK](#).

As the MIPs work in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, and because their work is shaped by the specificities of each organisation, the research for this chapter also reached out to other organisations working in

<sup>101</sup> Saviotti, A. et al, [Voices of Culture report: status and working conditions for artists, cultural and creative professionals](#). Goethe-Institut, 2021.

<sup>102</sup> See for example [Volume 2](#) in this series, or [Chapter 8](#) in this volume.



this space. These organisations included the Creative Europe Desks in France, Portugal, Greece and Latvia, Ukraine-based organisations working on international projects ([IZOLYATSIA](#) and the [Ukrainian Cultural Foundation](#)), and organisations supporting at-risk and displaced arts workers ([Vitsche](#), Berlin-based NGO that amplifies Ukrainian voices and subjectivity in Europe; [Question Me & Answer](#), which offers guidance to international artists new to Vienna and curates regular events; and [Office Ukraine](#), established in 2022 to support Ukrainian artists in Austria).

This text is not intended to be a mapping of all information providers of arts workers at risk, but is rather a sample from a very active group of practitioners with experience in the field.

The geographic reach is principally focused on the experience of European organisations (as well as one example from the USA), some of which developed in response to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia. The practices and challenges presented here are with regards to at-risk and displaced artists generally, rather than entering into the specific needs of different groups.

## Mobility Information Points and other information providers

In early 2025 On the Move produced a report that analysed all the consultations (in-person or online sessions during which MIPs give individual advice to artists or culture professionals), and engagement activities (usually workshops covering specific issues connected to cultural mobility) that the MIPs conducted throughout 2024. Of the 2,187 consultations involving nine MIPs, there were 134 recorded as being for arts workers at-risk. The most common nationalities of these artists-at-risk were Iranian, Russian, Belarussian, Ukrainian, Turkish and Palestinian. Their destination countries were mostly Germany followed by France, Portugal and Austria. In the case of Germany, the higher number of queries could be due to the fact that 'touring artists' has more staff members and a help desk service that has been active for a longer period than the other MIPs (and does not necessarily reflect a higher demand from arts workers at risk when compared to other countries). The main queries these artists at risk had were quite similar to the wider trend in consultations; the top three most queried topics

were related to visa, residency or work permits, tax, and social security.

One key difference was the way arts workers at risk were referred to the services of the MIPs; arts workers at risk were mainly referred by Government departments or Ministries, national or regional association for artists, or friends/colleagues (with referrals via the website being very few), while the overall number of arts workers and organisations were more often referred to MIP services by friends/colleagues, web/internet searches or other consultation services. This difference could in part be due to the German MIP 'touring artist's' involvement with the [Weltoffenes Berlin](#) programme of the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion, in which artists at risk are directed to their services (estimated at more than half of their consultations for arts workers at risk). They also work with Hamburg's Department for Culture on their programme for artists at risk, [INTRO](#), in a similar capacity.<sup>103</sup>

<sup>103</sup> touring artists advises applicants for the Weltoffenes Berlin programme of the Berlin Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion and supports the funded fellows with workshops and networking opportunities. See more about the ways touring artists supports artists and culture professionals who have had to leave their home countries due to the political situation and are now living in Germany [here](#).

Other MIPs work more with organisations that work with artists at risk, rather than consulting directly with the artists themselves. It was highlighted during the focus groups in July and August 2025 that it is also important to support these organisations who are interested in employing artists at risk, as they can potentially provide an element of stability through sponsoring visas or providing long term employment. However, the process of sponsorship can be very complex and organisations, especially if they are smaller or lack the experience in this area, might need support in navigating these administrative processes.

In addition to the MIPs and [Creative Europe Desks](#) (which provide assistance related to the Creative Europe programme and help cooperating with organisations in other Creative Europe countries), a number of other organisations in the focus groups provide information for the administrative processes to artists at risk.

Office Ukraine: Support for Ukrainian Artists was founded shortly after the start of Russia's large-scale war of aggression against Ukraine on 24 February 2022. The initiative supports Ukrainian artists and cultural workers of all disciplines who fled from Ukraine to Austria to escape the Russian invasion. As a mediation platform, the most important goal of Office Ukraine is to enable displaced artists and cultural workers to continue their artistic work in their respective fields and to promote long-term artistic collaboration between artists from Ukraine and the Austrian art scene. Office Ukraine is represented throughout Austria with a total of three offices, in Vienna ([tranzit.at](#)), in the MuseumsQuartier Wien Graz ([< rotor >](#)), and Innsbruck ([Künstler\\*innenhaus Büchsenhausen](#)). The teams in each office are made up of the members of the steering group as well as team members who have experience in the local art scene and/or are well-connected in the Ukrainian art scene. Since its inception, Office Ukraine has been contacted by more than 1,700 Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals

and has worked with more than 270 local and international art institutions and initiatives as well as many individual supporters.

At its inception, Vienna-based curator and writer Georg Schöllhammer, art historian and member of the Office Ukraine steering group, Simon Mraz, and the curators Margarethe Makovec and Anton Lederer from the Graz-based [< rotor > Centre for Contemporary Art](#), Andrei Siclodi from [Künstler\\*innenhaus Büchsenhausen](#) in Innsbruck, Karin Zimmer from the [Federal Ministry for Housing, Arts, Culture, Media and Sport](#) (BMWKMS), and Michaela Geboltsberger from [IG Architektur](#) and Larissa Agel from [tranzit.at](#), shared their experiences with Syrian artists who fled their homeland in 2015 and came to Austria. As Schöllhammer explains, 'In most cases, initial contact with refugee artists, often precariously housed, was soon lost and they vanished from the horizon of Austrian cultural institutions.' This was something they did not want to happen in the case of Ukrainian artists.<sup>104</sup>

From within Ukraine, there was the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation and IZOLYATSIA. The Ukrainian Cultural Foundation is a state-owned institution created in 2017 with aim to facilitate development of culture and arts in Ukraine, to provide favourable environment for development of intellectual and spiritual potential of individuals and society, wide access for the citizens to national cultural heritage, to support cultural diversity and integration of the Ukrainian culture into the world cultural space. IZOLYATSIA has several initiatives that work with and support European organisations helping Ukrainian artists. One such example is [Re-Source Ukraine](#), which grew out of an in-depth discussion between Ukrainian artists, cultural workers, and European cultural organisations to identify barriers and solutions for integrating Ukrainian artists and audiences into the European cultural scene as artists and engaged community. To ensure better inclusivity of Ukrainian artists and cultural professionals

<sup>104</sup> For more about the founding of Office Ukraine, see Office Ukraine. Support for Ukrainian Artist, 2024, [Office Ukraine. Two Years of Support for Ukrainian Artists](#), Verlag für moderne Kunst, 2024.

in European contexts, the project included art productions that represented their practices with the connection to the local Ukrainian community and networking events for artists and cultural professionals. The programme's main event was the Ukrainian month in Europe, which involved local and Ukrainian artists, represented their artistic work and involved even more people from wider local audiences. IZOLYATSIA also worked with local organisations in a number of countries who introduced Ukrainian artists to the local context. In some contexts it was challenging to identify Ukrainian artists, while in others there were many programmes available.

Question Me & Answer's (QMA) work includes supporting cultural institutions in implementing mechanisms for the inclusion of artists with different backgrounds living in Vienna into their regular programme, paying particular attention to the tokenisation of people belonging to a certain minority. In addition, they provide monthly

consultation sessions for those who have newly arrived in Vienna, covering topics such as financial support, where to go for help on social security and taxes, local cultural organisations and spaces, and networking to local artists. As part of this work, in 2023 QMA, along with the researcher Oliver Meurer, interviewed artists with migration and/or refugee experience about their demands to the City of Vienna. The result was a [manifesto](#) addressed to the administrative apparatus and it contains three groups of demands: administrative demands, monetary demands and social demands. Some of the administrative demands in the manifesto include reducing language barriers through the translation of key documents, increased transparency in the visa decision process and further guidance on questions regarding administrative procedures, targeted to artists and cultural workers with a migration and/or refugee background to clarify specific questions of this interest group. The manifesto also calls for more accessibility to public funds.

## Stages of support

Throughout the focus group discussions it was highlighted that there are several stages where arts workers at risk might need access to information and administrative support.

### Seeking refuge, emergency support and settling in

One of the first stages might be when they are in their home country seeking a way to relocate to a safe place. In this case, organisations such as MIPs are not the best places to assist, as MIPs have expertise in their own national context and there are fewer national mechanisms that allow for direct relocation from another country. Therefore, there are other organisations that are more relevant for arts workers at risk while they are in their home country or a neighbouring

country, such as [Artists at Risk Connection](#), [Artistic Freedom Initiative](#), [Artist Protection Fund](#), [Scholars at Risk](#), or [International Cities of Refuge Network](#), or [Martin Roth-Initiative](#), to name a few.

Once arts workers at risk have relocated from the country where they were at risk, they might enter a stage during which they need **initial emergency support**, such as finding housing or accessing financial support (one example is through government schemes such as the Temporary Protection Directive for Ukrainians seeking refuge in the European Union, which grants them residence, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance, social welfare, and education for children across all EU member states<sup>105</sup>), and learning about their

<sup>105</sup> To read more about the activation of the 2011 Temporary Protection Directive, see European Commission '[Temporary protection](#)' at Migration and Home Affairs.

new context by connecting with community groups. These initial and urgent needs were what Office Ukraine first focused on after the full-scale invasion by Russia and finding accommodation, in particular, was a real challenge. Other support included information about funding and legal questions. However, from this early stage Office Ukraine also offered events and networking meetings; even though the basic needs of housing and financial support were the most urgent, their main goal was to support artists to work in their field, so this connection to the Austrian scene was very important. Vitsche has also moved from a consultation centre for artists to facilitating cultural projects such as exhibitions, festivals, and residencies, within which they try to involve as many Ukrainian refugee artists as possible.

Aside from these initial emergency needs, arts workers at risk might enter a **stage of cultural adaptation and settling into their new location**, where they might need support in learning a language, help in gaining a deeper understanding of the cultural context, or health and wellbeing support. For example, Tamizdat's [Safe Haven Incubator for Musicians: New York City](#) (SHIM: NYC) programme supports artists through the day-to-day challenges, navigating things such as doctor's visits, insurance claims (which can be confusing for those who have lived their whole lives in the USA), or how to access mental health support (which can be an ongoing need). This can also include more personal support, beyond the administrative issues of resettling in a place, and takes a holistic approach.

Part of this role, then, is knowing what support each artist might be eligible for or able to access (which might depend on what visa they are on and what financial resources they have access to), what their specific needs are and then knowing the right place to refer them to. This might include walking people through administrative processes or it might be connecting them with particular communities or it might be helping

them in the processes of finding ongoing work. Office Ukraine also highlighted how their initial focus on emergency support (such as emergency accommodation) has shifted to questions related to long-term adaptation (such as finding ongoing work or prolonging their stay).

## Transitioning to long term residency

Another challenge that was highlighted in the focus group discussions was that some arts workers at risk might have access to short-term programmes, such as artist residencies, but that **the transition to long-term residency in a country can be challenging**. This might depend on visa requirements; for example, if they want a long-term visa or residency permit, they might need sponsorship from an organisation or consistent paid work (which might require a minimum number of hours per week or letters of intent from potential clients), which can be challenging in the arts. This might necessitate that arts workers adapt to work within the constraints of the visas available (such as pursuing academic paths, as this path might be more open to them). However, certain visas can restrict the ability for arts workers to sustain themselves financially, through a limit of the number of hours they are allowed to work, making it challenging to support themselves. In the UK, there has been interest in the [Global Talent Visa](#)<sup>106</sup>, especially from areas that are experiencing conflict and instability (this is a long stay visa that is a fast track towards settlement). However, this visa can be expensive and it would not be open for everyone.

The transition from short-term programmes and visas to long-term residency can be where MIPs are contacted by arts workers at risk, for example, to ask for help in the renewal of their residency permit. As Anaïs Lukacs Director of MobiCulture mentions when there are strict regulations it can be challenging to know what status each artist is eligible to apply for, so MIPs often help artists navigate this residency permit renewal process.

<sup>106</sup> The Global Talent Visa is open to a leader or potential leader in one of the following fields: academia or research, arts and culture, and digital technology.

When an artist already knows or already has contacts with an organisation who will hire them or work with them this can help the process, as without the assurance of work it can be difficult to access these long-term residency permits. This process might also be led by the development creative projects: if an MIP receives a very general inquiry about a residency permit or wanting to find an organisation to partner with it can be difficult to know where to direct them, however, if an artist comes with a specific project in mind then the MIP can be more targeted in where they can refer the query.

Transitioning to long-term residency permits requires artists to think about the next stage even as they are just starting their temporary stay. Many public funding programmes or grants that are directed at displaced artists or artists at risk are short term and they do not always think about what happens afterwards. As Sebastian Hoffmann from Germany's touring artists explains, 'what we see a lot is that artists at risk, they have this kind of financial cushion, this kind of safety during these government-sponsored fellowship programmes, but the time after is usually quite catastrophic because they don't have any money and they don't have any other grants that they can survive on after that fellowship has ended.' MIPs can try to ease this transition by encouraging arts workers at risk who are on these programmes to think about what will happen afterwards and to raise awareness about the available funds and timelines. In the case of some MIP (such as touring artists from Germany), they have been working with local organisations who advise artists on where they can apply for public or private funding for their projects, so that artists at risk can be prepared for this transition. In some cases arts workers at risk have had to leave their host countries due to lack of funding and information providers do not always have the resources to provide in-depth consultations or educational programmes for arts workers at risk.

The step from emergency support to longer term stability might require giving up support provided to those with asylum seeker or refugee status (that might have maximum income caps, for example) in order to take up employment, become an entrepreneur or to earn more. However, given **the income and employment instability that can come with working as an artist**, this can feel like a big risk. As Stijn Michielsens from Cultuurloket in Belgium highlights, 'if [artists at risk] have a social protection in Belgium, and then they want to develop professional activities, it's difficult for them because they need to let go of their basic protection to go to an unstable professional protection, and that's something really difficult for them to lose.'<sup>107</sup>

## Developing a community

A point raised throughout these discussions, which is relevant at any stage of the settling in process, was the importance of **developing a sense of community** and the feeling of a safe space. As arts workers at risk come from different local contexts, even if they are from the same country it does not mean they have a shared experience. Therefore, many information providers have provided regular spaces where arts workers at risk could meet each other, talk to each other and share experiences. For example, Office Ukraine, from April 2022, have implemented Information and Networking events in Innsbruck, the Get Together meetings in Vienna and the Open House project in Graz, in which every second Wednesday they met each other and those from the local arts scene so Ukrainian and Austrian art communities got to know each other and found new contacts and connections. As explained in the publication [\*Office Ukraine. Two Years of Support for Ukrainian Artists\*](#), the Open House concept has also given rise to the Solidarity Art Event series, in which Ukrainian artists are offered a platform to present their artistic work. Other formats, such as workshops and readings, were also integrated into

<sup>107</sup> This was also reflected in [GMA's Manifesto](#), with interviewed artists explaining that 'when you are in a transition moment, also from student to artist visa, it's very difficult ... you don't necessarily have the security of having not to earn money in order to focus on getting attached to an institution or an intuitional program or any type of project funding.'

the Solidarity Art Event programme, to increase the visibility of Ukrainian artists in the local scene. Finding these points of connection is also important for internally displaced people, taking into consideration the diversity of communities.

Speaking one's own language can also be an important element of creating these community spaces, as the language barrier can be one of the main challenges facing artists at risk. Making spaces that are more welcoming can include working with community members to co-deliver

sessions in different languages, and this language assistance can also be included in administrative processes. For example, in the USA there are translations available for certain processes, but arts workers also need to know that they have a right to ask for this.

It is important to consider how these spaces are created and with who, as inviting representatives who are involved in administrative processes (such as apply for a visa) might make participants feel less able to share freely about their challenges.

## Supporting at-risk and displaced arts workers in their resettlement journey

Through the discussions several issues were raised about how to best support arts workers at risk. The below section summarises some of these challenges and approaches raised in the focus groups.

### Defining roles: being clear about the limitations

Given the different stages of the settling in process of arts workers at risk, it was highlighted in the discussions that it is very important to be clear about expectations around what MIPs and other information providers can assist with. This is especially the case for queries that come from outside the information point's own country, such as queries from artists seeking to flee situations of risk; the information point does not have the knowledge or expertise to address these queries, although they can direct the queries to other relevant organisations. Additionally, the support or information required by an asylum seeker still in their home or neighbouring country is very different to that of someone who has already relocated to, for example, a European Union country.

An example of other areas where information points are not able to provide extensive support was given by Germany's touring artists, which has two areas in particular where they are not able to provide advice or support: asylum seeker processes and applying for social benefits. In both these cases there are well established organisations that are experts in these areas. Additionally, these are both complex processes that are always evolving. However, it was also noted that sometimes these other **organisations lack the specific knowledge about the arts sector and the specific challenges those working in the arts sector might face**, and Hoffmann from touring artists notes that 'there is definitely a lot of need for more specialised services regarding social benefits.'

Another area that lay beyond the MIPs' mandate is matching artists with organisations, a process that can be particularly important for those wanting to transition to different visas or more stable residency and employment opportunities. Although they provided spaces for networking, they could not undertake a more detailed matchmaking role. Hoffmann explains that 'as a mobility information point, we just don't have



the staff and knowledge to match artists with a potential host organisation.’ Lukacs from MobiCulture also expressed her frustration at not being able to provide this support, saying that ‘our missions as Mobility Info Point is not matching artists and organisations’ and that is also not something they can do for artists generally, not just arts workers at risk. Lukacs tries to share resources of where arts workers can find opportunities, but when there is already a project in development they can be more targeted in their advice. Nicola Smyth from the Arts Council England (part of the Arts Infopoint UK) highlights that although they have access to networks and information that would be required for a matching process (since they are in a funding relationship with a lot of the organisations that people would be wanting to work with) they do not have much staffing resource within the MIP. Smyth highlights that for them, ‘it’s less about access to the information and more the time required to do that kind of individual consultation.’ This matching might be outside resources of MIPs, but it is a much-needed support service for arts workers at risk, and it is not always easy to find an organisation that can help with this process.

Rachel Switlick from Tamizdat’s SHIM programme also highlights **the importance of being clear about the limits of what they can provide and their expertise**, directing people to other professionals when necessary: ‘while we do very much care, it’s not the same as having actual licensed mental health support ... so [it’s about] being clear about some of the limitations that we have, and then trying to find resources for them that are accessible if they exist.’ These limits can come in the form of lack of expertise but they can also be defined by the parameters of the programme, funding of each organisation, or the political context. For example, the SHIM residency is normally for one year, and while the programme aims to keep in touch with the residents and endeavours to prepare them for the time after

the residency, they cannot continue to provide the same level of support<sup>108</sup>. Switlick adds that talking about the level of support is particularly important in expensive cities like New York City.

Katie James from Wales Arts International (part of the Arts Infopoint UK) is sometimes approached by arts workers at risk to clarify if they are eligible for public funding (especially with regards to their particular visa, which might be different to the visa of artists who are not at risk) or from those who are having difficulty understanding the information online or who have slow response times to their applications. James explains that they are seeking to ‘develop a bit more of a signposting page on our website ... recognising that this skill set probably lies elsewhere, and there’s already support schemes in place.’ They see their website as a starting point in being able to direct people to support structures that already exist.

Throughout the conversations the MIPs in particular emphasised their roles as **‘dispatchers’**, directing queries to the most relevant experts and maintaining relevant and up-to-date information. Hoffmann explains the process as follows: ‘Let’s say, when we get a request from an artist at risk, our role as a mobility information point is also kind of a dispatcher; we should have a certain knowledge of what other organisations and services exist and then we could try to direct the person who asks us to maybe a specific service for a queer Ukrainian speaker, or someone who may not need help with applying for cultural funding, but maybe more psychosocial help or medical help, which is not something that we can provide.’ For Hoffmann, this directing to the most appropriate support can be one of the biggest challenges, due to the different types of structures with very different financial resources. Additionally, ‘if an artist needs information in a very regionalised country like Germany, you would need a lot of different information because there’s different contact

<sup>108</sup> For more information about the SHIM programme, see Allia, L. ‘Chapter 14: Case Study: New York City Safe Haven Residency Programme’ in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#), On the Move, 2025.



points in different regions and cities.’ Hoffmann has also found that it is a challenge to point towards up-to-date information, since many links to this kind of collated information, and especially about funding and grants specific to artists at risk programmes, are short term and are quickly out of date: ‘this especially frustrating regarding help for artists from Ukraine, because there were so many networks and information pages that were set up in 2022; they’re still online, but they’re outdated.’

## Developing partnerships

Many of the organisations highlighted the different ways that they developed partnerships to either provide information, reach out to arts workers at risk or build trust.

During the discussions several organisations mentioned **the importance of directing arts workers at risk to expert service providers** (for example, in asylum seeker or social security applications, or health providers). For SHIM the partnerships are sometimes built on a case-by-case basis, given the situation of each arts worker at risk (as it might need to be adapted to their visa, financial or personal situation). However, the programme itself is a collaboration between Artistic Freedom Initiative, Joe’s Pub at the Public Theater, and Tamizdat and it is also part of the larger The New York City Artist Safe Haven Residency Programme, which is a coalition that includes Residency Unlimited, and previously, Westbeth Artists Housing.

However, some partnerships can be more challenging to develop, and the difficulty of **building trust** was mentioned during the focus groups. Sometimes it would take a someone with a personal relationship, even if they were based in another country, to make the first introduction.

Finding the right communities to connect with was also seen as an important way to get information to arts workers at risk but that it

was not always easy to reach out to arts workers at risk. Nastia Khlestova from Office Ukraine mentioned personal networks as key in reaching out. This personal connection can be vital in getting information to the right people. For example, Mykhailo Glubokyi from IZOLYATSIA provided the example of websites that provide a lot of information but that have not been able to reach out to wide audiences, so that people just do not know they exist. An example where a platform does seem to be working is the [House of Europe](#), which is a programme funded by the European Union and implemented by Goethe-Institut Ukraine fostering professional and creative exchange between Ukrainians and their colleagues in EU countries and the UK.

It was also mentioned in the focus groups that some organisations are at times approached because they are very clear about working with arts workers at risk, such as Office Ukraine or others who have built a reputation working in certain communities. This could also be seen in some platforms that were established at the beginning of the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine, such as the Ukrainian Cultural Foundation’s platform connecting artists’ emergency needs (such as housing, equipment, or support to continuing doing their work) with stakeholders who could help them meet these needs<sup>109</sup>. For MIPs, it can be more challenging to raise awareness of their work for arts workers at risk, given they are just one of their many target groups. As has been mentioned above, there is information available directed at arts workers at risk (for example, since Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, CzechMobility.Info established a special section for Ukrainian artists in their information channel [CultureNet](#)), but it is important to find the right space alongside other organisations supporting arts workers at risk. Hoffmann mentioned that they were interested in developing more connections with organisations that cater to specific diaspora groups, as the support these organisations provide (for example connecting

<sup>109</sup> Other examples of such platforms set up in the wake of the full-scale invasion include [United for Ukraine](#), [EU4UA](#) or [Helfende Wände](#), which all grew out of the need for emergency housing.

with community, being able to communicate in one's mother tongue, creating a sense of feeling at home, to name a few) are complementary to what a MIP can provide. Office Ukraine is already working with many interest groups (to help spread information, for example), as these are already established networks. Anastasija Konkina from [Creative Europe Desk Latvia](#) also mentioned how working with the Ukrainian Creative Europe Desk was particularly helpful in finding the right people and organisations, as they were connected to the Ukrainian diaspora and they could connect Creative Europe Desk Latvia with those who wanted to participate in Creative Europe projects. This outreach can be a continual process, especially as every arts worker at risk is on their own trajectory with different needs and at different stages. Therefore, it might be necessary to develop a mixed approach (connect with interest groups, communities and diaspora organisations, provide information in online and in-person networking sessions, developing spaces for networking with new communities, and more) to make sure arts workers at risk do not fall through the cracks.

Developing partnerships is also a way to **support the limited resources of MIPs**. As Mafalda Sebastião highlights, partnerships with the public institutions could be further developed. These partnerships could include access to spaces (such as schools or libraries) or connections with public institutions that have the competence to take care of these basic needs in social, legal, health or economical spheres. Sebastião emphasises that although these partnerships might seem like they are not possible, it is sometimes easier to develop than it seems. It might take time, but once such partnerships are established they can help by providing updated, secure and correct information, joining MIPs in a more active partnership. It can also be the role of the MIP to advocate for arts workers at risk in these contexts, by raising awareness of their particular needs and challenges.

In other political contexts it can be important to consider private partnerships. In the USA, for example, there have been more discussions about how to develop different funding partnerships that are less reliant on public funding, raising the need to build more relationships with private foundations.

## How can the provision of information for at-risk and displaced arts workers be upscaled?

The following outlines key operational aspects that would ideally be in place for running a mobility information provider targeted at arts workers who are displaced and at risk. It draws from the conversations, practices and experiences shared throughout this document. Mobility Information Points or other information providers may already implement some or many of these features. The elements below are not intended as a one-size-fits-all solution, but rather a consideration of the key elements to be included, as well as some key points to consider, to upscale what already exists.

### Organisational structure

There are many organisations working with arts workers at risk at various stages, therefore it is important to ensure that 1) a targeted information provider does not replicate the work other organisations are already doing and that 2) arts workers at risk do not fall between the gaps of service providers. Mobility Information Points are well placed to help arts workers at risk through moments of transition (which might involve moving between different organisations or

service providers working with arts workers at risk or navigating unfamiliar bureaucratic processes). However, it can be a challenge for one Mobility Information Point to have enough familiarity across all artistic disciplines and all stages of the settlement or resettlement process, on a local, national and international level. This challenge could be addressed through **developing a consortium that can pool together their expertise, networks and experiences** in order to provide targeted and up-to-date support for the individual needs of arts workers at risk. A Mobility Information Point (ideally one based in each country) could coordinate this consortium, as they have an overview of mobility processes as well as the expertise in accurately directing queries. The members of the consortium could change (responding to the changing communities of at-risk and displaced arts workers in the case of outbreak of conflicts, for example) and the consortium could reach out to specific community groups or diasporas as the need arises.

These consortia could be established at a national level and they might include **organisations with specific expertise in certain regions or localities** (which might be the case in regionalised countries or in hubs, such as Berlin, which receive more arts workers at risk) or **across different art forms**. It would be most effective if it were to **join public and private bodies**; this would help to share public resources, be up to date with changes in administrative, social security and visa processes, and be connected and build trust within communities of arts workers at risk.

Although operating at a national level, these **consortia would collaborate closely with other such bodies at an international level, both within receiving countries and countries of origin**. Developing a network with other receiving countries can help to share learnings and resources, connect arts workers at risk who might be relocating and to advocate at European or international level for better conditions for arts workers at risk (particularly in identified points of tension, such as the transition between different visas or having visa conditions that take into

account the specificities of the culture sector – short contracts, etc.). Creating strong networks with countries of origin can help in developing cultural competence and understanding of where the arts workers at risk have fled from, and it can also help the consortium to identify and reach out to communities with arts workers at risk in their own countries.

## Outreach to at-risk and displaced arts workers

Reaching out to arts workers at risk (so that they can identify these consortium as a key place to go for information about their cross-border mobility administrative issues) is partly achieved through the members of the consortium – through those organisations that have already been working for a long period with arts workers at risk or with specific communities or community interest groups. It **takes time to build trust** within community groups and building strong partnerships with such communities is a way to reach out, raise awareness of the work of information providers and keep up to date with the challenges arts workers at risk face. In this process it is important to consider ways to **create spaces for community feeling**. Some activities or approaches to help develop these community spaces can include **in-person gatherings**, involving **cultural mediators or translators**, or involving **those with lived experience as an arts worker at risk** within the organisations of the consortium.

Alongside this trust-building and creating spaces for a feeling of community, the consortium can also reach out by **publicising their activities and services**. This could be through community and diaspora groups (also in native languages), personal networks, social media and more **informal, trust-based communication methods**. They can also reach out to organisations based in the home country to help connect with displaced arts workers. Finally, attention should be paid to intersectional factors when reaching out – are there specific interest groups that are relevant for certain at-risk arts workers?

While engaging with arts workers at risk, it is valuable to **embed feedback loops for listening to the actual needs and adapting the services and approaches**. This is also a way to adapt to the changing needs (for example, as new conflicts arise) or to changing political contexts (where visa or asylum seeker regulations might change). The consortium model can adapt to these changes in a more agile way, incorporating different organisations as the needs change.

## Providing information and supporting people through the administrative processes

One of the key deliverables for a consortium on the delivery of cross-border administration support to at-risk and displaced arts workers to it direct people to clear information and help them find answers to their administration challenges, whether that is through providing direct answers, directing them to further online information, or directing them to another organisation that provides specific support.

One of the first steps, especially for general queries or for those seeking to orient themselves in the process, can be an **online website, managed and kept up to date by the consortium**. This online portal would need to clearly signpost information that is specifically for arts workers at risk. In terms of what it contains it would need to:

- clearly outline the information needed at each stage of the settlement process,
- provides detail for the specific process and supporting organisations in each locality, and
- connect to an international network of up-to-date information portals so that a national information provider and easily refer someone to another context, when needed.

This first entry point could help at-risk and displaced arts workers to gain an understanding

of what processes they need to think about, where they are in the administrative journey and who they can approach for more detailed assistance.

In addition to these information portals, there would need to be **personalised consultations** for at-risk and displaced arts workers. These would be adapted to individual needs and they would be a way to 1) provide answers to complex queries to which there is no straightforward answer available and 2) **accompany the arts worker in this complex process**. The latter might involve more proactive follow up to support them through the steep learning curve and to help mitigate the feeling of being overwhelmed in an unfamiliar environment (and within a bureaucratic process). This can also mean directing people to mental health and well-being support or other cultural adaptation or community support. Proactive follow up can also help at-risk arts workers make sure they are aware of what they need to be thinking about at each stage (for example, applying for the next round of grants in time before their government support might end) to help them in the particularly challenging transition processes.

An element that could be expanded upon further would be the capacity for the consortium to help at-risk and displaced arts workers identify and approach organisations that they could work with. This **matchmaking** role is particularly important for arts workers at-risk as finding a local organisation to work for or with might be a requirement of obtaining an ongoing visa (a requirement that might be particularly urgent in situations in which they are not able to 'return home' or develop relationships without the time pressure). How this matchmaking is developed might depend on the size of each country and the numbers of at-risk and displaced arts workers that country might host, although it would need to take into consideration different localities and art forms (for example, through developing a wide network of experts such as curators or producers).

Finally, the consortium can **host in-person gatherings and create informal spaces** for at-risk and displaced arts workers to gain information, build networks, and develop a sense of community. Things to consider when hosting these spaces can include language and translation (for example, host gatherings in partnership with diaspora groups and/or in multiple languages), include those with personal experience of being arts workers at risk in the design and implementation of the gatherings and consider ways to make these gatherings feel safe (for example, that they are not hosted or do not include those who can make decisions about a person's residency status, as that might inhibit participants from sharing openly).

## Advocating for at-risk and displaced arts workers

Given that a consortium would be very up to date on the cross-border administration challenges faced by at-risk and displaced arts workers, part of their role could be to **advocate for the needs of these workers at a national**

**and international level.** For example, they could raise key challenges, such as the lack of transparency of processes, long wait times on visa processes and decisions, lack of flexibility within administrative processes to adapt to the specific challenges in the culture sector (such as shorter contracts or more precarious employment conditions). Gathering the data and personal accounts across different consortia would provide an overview of the pressure points across Europe and internationally.

The consortium could also **support cultural organisations who are interested in sponsoring visas and work permits for arts workers at risk.** This could include activities such as raising awareness about the possibility of employing arts workers at risk, sharing networks so that arts workers at risk can connect with relevant organisations, or providing information about the administrative process to these organisations.

Additionally, the consortium could **educate those who provide support and services to those at-risk on the specific needs of arts workers.**

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# CHAPTER 14

## Case Study: New York City Safe Haven Residency Programme

By Lina Allia

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This case study investigates the New York City Artist Safe Haven Residency Program (NYCASHRP), following on from Dr Mary Ann DeVlieg's article<sup>110</sup>, which focused on how artists are supported to integrate into the USA's professional arts environment. The aim here is to analyse a specific US-based residency programme solely dedicated to hosting artists at risk.

This article explores a long stay residency model<sup>111</sup>, managed by a coalition of partners. Based in New York City, the case study not only outlines the objectives, success factors and challenges, but also explores the innovative approaches developed.

## Background

The New York City Artist Safe Haven Residency Program (NYCASHRP) is a year-long residency in NYC for international artists who have faced censorship, persecution, or other threats to their freedom of expression.

Founded in 2017 by [Artistic Freedom Initiative](#) (AFI), Todd Lanier Lester ([ArtistSafety.net/FreeDimensional](#)), [Residency Unlimited](#), and [Westbeth Artists Housing](#), NYCASHRP is an innovative urban artist safety hosting programme that brings together arts and advocacy organisations, providing holistic support for international at-risk artists.

Through this coalition, the residency offers artists legal aid, resettlement assistance, professional

development, financial assistance for living expenses and artist materials, advocacy on their behalf, community engagement, and other services. In 2024 and 2025, the programme is hosting **visual artists and musicians** through a coalition that includes Artistic Freedom Initiative, Residency Unlimited, Tamizdat, and Joe's Pub at the Public Theater.

From 2017 through to 2023, the programme included free artist housing at the historic Westbeth Artists Housing<sup>112</sup> community in New York City's West Village, located in the heart of Manhattan's West Village. In 2024 and 2025, NYCASHRP provides financial assistance to artists in residence for their living expenses and artist materials.

## The coalition model

The expansion of the programme and the network of partners was gradual. AFI and Todd Lanier Lester were first approached by Westbeth in 2017, who offered them housing for refugee artists. AFI suggested turning this opportunity into a

residency programme, given their experience with at risk artists. Instead of providing permanent housing for refugee artists, they decided to support those facing a variety of persecution due to their work or identities through providing them

110 DeVlieg, M. A., 'Chapter 2: Opening Our Minds: Including Incoming Artists in the Communities and Cultural Sector of the USA' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#), On the Move, 2025.

111 Temporality is a key element in the programme, cf. Yazaji, R., [Intersecting Temporalities: At-Risk and Displaced Artists in Transition. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 1 Scoping Review](#), On the Move, 2025.

112 Westbeth Artists Housing is a non-profit housing complex that has provided affordable live-work space to New York City's artists since the late 1960s.



with a space as long-stay resident artists, and that's how NYCASHRP first came about.

Westbeth offered one studio for a pilot phase—a live-work space in Manhattan—to host a visual artist. Due to preexisting relations, the core partners of this stage of the coalition were AFI, Todd Lanier Lester, RU, and Tamizdat, after which numerous professional development partners were brought on board. The success of the prototype led to expanding the programme from one apartment to four apartments over the course of only a few years, growing to one apartment per discipline: visual arts, writing, music, and a wild card discipline, with extra space to accommodate family members.

From 2017 to 2023, professional development for writers and filmmakers (fiction, nonfiction, film, plays) was provided by partners, including [The New School](#), [Artists at Risk Connection](#), [Fordham University](#) and Ledig House (that since became [Art Omi](#)). Opportunities included the chance to develop one's network, teaching positions, and developing new work<sup>113</sup>. The arrangements were different discipline to discipline. The writers hosted by the programme, for example, focused on network building, there were meet and greet sessions organised, and one resident was offered a teaching position for a year by a partner university.

In 2019, AFI and Tamizdat developed and launched the [Safe Haven Incubator for Musicians: New York City](#) (SHIM: NYC). This third arm of the programme matches musicians in residence with carefully selected mentors. SHIM provides musicians with an opportunity to develop a specific work, hone their skills, and expand their professional network within the performing arts industry nationally and internationally. They do this in partnership with Joe's Pub at the Public Theater and the Joe's Pub Working Group, which allows for peer-to-peer connections.

Interviewees agree that the biggest strength of the NYCASHRP is its coalition model, which allows for the flexibility that makes a **holistic approach** possible. Each organisation contributes their expertise and their resources, which establishes a complementary pool of potential answers to the resident's needs.

AFI manages the programme overall and each arm (discipline) hosts one artist at a time for a duration of 12 months; the content is therefore very tailored to each specific resident. The experiences are curated based on the needs identified, and the extensive networks of the partners are solicited according to their relevance to the project at hand.

## Objectives and goals

While the main goal and priorities have remained the same – supporting hosted artists at risk in the most holistic fashion possible – the conditions have shifted, given the fluctuating funding and resources at the disposal of the coalition.

At the end of 2024, Westbeth was no longer able to provide the housing and as a result after seven years of consistent, free accommodation for the residents, NYCASHRP redirected its funding to

provide monthly stipends to cover living costs (in an attempt to continue to meet the expenses of daily needs), in addition to granting one yearly creation and production stipend.

Given the **tailor-made approach of the programme**, the specific objectives vary from artist to artist, which creates distinct scenarios each cycle. While some artists are coming out of an emergency situation that might require the

<sup>113</sup> The programme is not hosting writers or filmmakers in 2024 and 2025.

prioritisation of legal support, others might be more settled on the legal front and are in need of taking their career to the next stage.

Different artistic disciplines bring about different sets of variables. For example, musicians or performing arts' professionals in a situation of displacement require more than just access to a workspace and material supplies, as the scene, the audience and specific instruments are essential to their work. SHIM also takes into consideration the importance of connections and collaborators

for live performers. Through the partnership with Joe's pub, access to venues, bookings, and peer-communities is made available thanks to pre-existing programmes, such as Joe's pub working group.

This **flexibility**, to adapt to individual needs and specific needs of different artistic disciplines, is a fundamental part of the way the programme is run, and it enables the programme to fully support the residents in a way that is both accommodating and successful.

## Funding and resources

Currently, NYCASHRP is supported by [The Andy Warhol Foundation for The Visual Arts](#), [The Wilhelm Family Foundation](#), and the [New York State Council on the Arts](#) with the support of the [Office of the Governor](#) and the [New York State Legislature](#).

The first two to three years of the programme the coalition received no funding, except for the apartments, which were provided free of charge by Westbeth. Each of the partners were donating their time and expertise, pro bono, to the residency programme. Later, NYCASHRP had the most success in securing funding from private foundations, starting with a first modest grant. This first grant allowed for the coalition members to be partially compensated, and the additional budget went to the artists.

In 2021, NYCASHRP acquired the first (two-year) grant from the Warhol Foundation. As of the time of writing (August 2025), AFI is in its second two-year cycle and plans on reapplying for two more years. While the Warhol Foundation has been generous, the grant does not cover most of the

labour of the coalition partners; their contribution to NYCASHRP continues to be pro bono.

Although the programme has proven, since its founding in 2017, that it has created a sustainable ecosystem for supporting international artists at risk, in AFI's experience securing funding is a challenging process. The singularity of the coalition model can be confusing for potential funders, who might find it difficult to understand the roles of each of the members. Also, a year-long programme that is tailor-made and managed by multiple non-profit organisations creates a very deep impact on a few individuals, whereas it is usually more appealing to funders to see a higher number of artists impacted, (which can be achieved with shorter-term residencies, for example).

Similarly to Europe, the USA is experiencing a general decrease in the funding for culture and the arts, due to budget cuts and changes in strategies<sup>114</sup>. Additionally, the process of US immigration is increasingly complex<sup>115</sup>. This context has direct repercussions on NYCASHRP's mission and is both a cause for concern and a motivation to cooperate internationally<sup>116</sup>.

114 Shaw, H., '[The Show Can't Go On](#)', The New Yorker, 24 April 2025.

115 See Tamizdat's webpage '[FAQs for travelling to the US now](#)', 26 March 2025.

116 DeVlieg, M. A., 'Chapter 2: Opening Our Minds: Including Incoming Artists in the Communities and Cultural Sector of the USA' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#), On the Move, 2025.

## Target groups and selection process

When it comes to the application and selection process, AFI generally takes the lead because of the extensive access it has to the international community of artists at risk. No open call is issued, due to the limited capacity of the programme (only being able to host one artist per discipline per year). Artists are directly approached and are asked to share their portfolio and to answer a set of questions that vary cycle to cycle. After this, a collective assessment takes place within the coalition in order to prepare the best tailor-made experience possible. Although there haven't been any open calls for NYCASHRP, AFI has an extensive network of artists at risk, and they respond to various demands of assistance outside of the residency programme.

Aside from the requirement of being an at-risk artist, **the eligibility criteria are not fixed**. Unlike more conventional residencies, it is less a matter of whether the candidate is a good fit for the residency and more a case of whether the residency will be able to cater to the candidate's needs.

Several considerations are discussed among the coalition members to balance out their offerings and to determine if the programme can contribute to the candidate's growth in a significant meaningful manner. These might include: Is the candidate more focused on rest and recuperation or on creation and production? If the latter, are the resources available fit for their project? What is their level of proficiency in English? Would they adjust well to settling in a city as intense as NYC?

As for candidates with dependent family members, three apartments could host an artist and their partner, the fourth one had previously been used to host families. Since this housing is no longer available, and the aid provided comes in the form of stipends, the programme considers artists at-risk already based in NYC and offers a tailor-made experience to assist their professional development.

In conclusion, applications are not assessed by comparing the artistic merit of a candidate with the level of risk they are facing, but instead by **choosing who will gain the most out of the residency experience**.

## Types of support provided

Thanks to the coalition model, NYCASHRP can provide holistic assistance to its residents through the following support:

- **Housing and financial assistance:** By the end of 2024, NYCASHRP was no longer able to provide housing, however, the funding was redirected to provide monthly stipends to cover living expenses and to alleviate, as much as possible, the weight of costly daily needs.
- **Professional development:** One of the core elements of the programme is to provide workshops, access training and to create or

connect to networking opportunities that help artists at risk engage with their creative peers.

- **Creation, production and/or presentation support:** One yearly creation-production stipend is provided to each artist, in addition to showcasing opportunities.
- **Legal support:** Support is provided to help navigate the bureaucracy of settling in, which can include assistance with visas, asylum applications, or legal representation when necessary.

- **Healthcare:** Assistance to access medical and mental health services and facilities is provided.
- **Language support:** Language classes or translation are not directly included in the programme, but assistance is provided as much as possible.

A cornerstone of NYCASHRP's work is to provide both financial, legal and professional assistance, and care for the artist's well-being in the broader sense.

Rachel Switlik, Artistic Liaison and Advocate at SHIM, connects with the performers in residence on a very personal level and she highlights how essential community is to safety. Yet, in a context of displacement, one loses a lot going through a challenging or even traumatic journey and so

having someone to go to directly on a personal level (as opposed to reaching out to an institution) is crucial. Knowing one person on a first name basis, who they can text and get coffee with, is very helpful.

Rachel says that her role is not a replacement for mental health assistance (and in fact she must be wary of not overwhelming the resident and making them feel obliged to contact her), but rather she is there to make sure they feel comfortable reaching out to her if they wish to connect on a more informal level. In the other arms of the programme, AFI provides a lot of personal support and checks in regularly throughout the residency. The long duration of the residency creates **profound and intentional relations** between the artist and their ecosystem of support.

## Monitoring and evaluation

To date, the residency programme has hosted over 20 artists from Iran, Syria, Lebanon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Vietnam, Haiti, Uganda, India, Tunisia, Afghanistan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Palestine, Russia, and Kyrgyzstan.

At the end of each residency, AFI conducts exit interviews. Additionally, SHIM are currently reaching out to the artists they have hosted to go through a 'where are they now?' evaluation

process and collect feedback on what was helpful and what areas of improvement could be explored.

Considering the nature of the work, the experiences artist to artist vary and it is difficult to set a rigid metric of success. However, the small scale of the programme allows the organisations to monitor short- to mid-term impact through regular check-ins and follow-ups after the residency.

## Challenges and limitations

The primary challenge artists are faced with upon arriving in New York City is settling in; however fascinating and bustling with creative organisations, people and opportunities it is, NYC presents newcomers with many challenges. The creative industry is highly competitive and difficult to break into, for example, and understanding the subway system, pricing, insurance and, on a broader level,

health insurance, credit score, and other aspects of life in the USA can be overwhelming.

Isolation also comes up as a main difficulty, as artists relocating into a country that is very unfamiliar often experience **feelings of loneliness**, which may be heightened by specific circumstances such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

The professional development component is fundamental, but it does not alleviate the need for building personal relationships and connections. The programme takes this into account and helps to connect the artist both with professional networks and with relevant communities (cultural, political, etc.). In this vein, in 2025 AFI launched [The Artist Community Network \(ACN\)](#), an artist-led initiative designed to facilitate peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, professional development, partnership-building, and artistic and networking events for the artists within AFI's NYC-based community. This initiative is designed to empower artists to support each other as co-creators, organisers, and friends.

Within the coalition the challenges differ with regards to the artists' legal, emotional, professional, and cultural situations. What is difficult for artists and hosts alike is the end of the programme, or rather the transition out of the residence. The next opportunity is not always lined up after the residency period, so the artists are usually encouraged and accompanied to prepare for the next step, by, for example, saving money when possible and connecting with peers and relevant communities. Artists based in NYC prior to the residency usually have an easier time transitioning out of it.

Rachel from SHIM, echoes the **concern for the post-residency phase**; finding oneself outside the stability of the wide array of resources and housing of the programme not only creates pressure to make the most of those opportunities while they have them but also to figure out the next step, with a deadline in mind. A lot of residencies have high expectations of output, however, the priority of NYCASHRP is to give options and support. The partners do their best to maintain relationships post-residency to assist in the post-residency phase, if needed.

Now that housing is no longer available, the coalition is faced with a big challenge it needs to adjust to. Gracie Golden, Resettlement and Partnerships Manager at AFI, asserts that 'communication can't be overdone or overstated' when asked about lessons learned from working on the residency: 'It is as important to acknowledge the resources we're able to provide as much as the resources we're not able to provide. Setting expectations of what the programme can and cannot provide and understanding the needs and desires of the artists; it's key that everybody is on the same page.'

Among the insights gained from implementing the programme, the need for integrating **mental health**<sup>117</sup> and supporting residents is a recurring concern.

## Conclusions and perspectives

Among the possible areas of upscaling, NYCASHRP would like to reintegrate housing with the possibility of hosting artists with families, offer a stipend to bridge the gap between the end of the residency and the next step on the career path, and invest more resources in the

artist liaison role, as the emotional labour might increase if more artists are hosted.

As described by Rachel, the role of artistic liaison can be very helpful<sup>118</sup>; on the one hand they can provide support for the team managing the programme (who receive a lot of requests from

117 Ilić, M., 'Chapter 8: Supportive Interventions for the Mental Health and Well-being of At-Risk and Displaced Arts Workers' in Floch, Y. (ed.), [Protecting and supporting At-risk and Displaced Arts Professionals Across Borders. The Situation of At-risk and Displaced Artists and Culture Professionals – Volume 3 Case Studies](#), On the Move, 2025.

118 Lanier Lester, T., Tucker, A. and Monterroso, S., [A Guide to History, Ethics, & Practice](#), ArtistSafety.net and Artistic Freedom Initiative, 2019, p. 6.

different sources and have little time or attention to provide to the artist's needs), and on the other hand they can support the artists at risk who might be uncomfortable to ask for specific day-to-day needs that fall outside of the general services provided. Someone who checks in regularly and offers informal conversation, who connects more on a personal level rather than as a peer or a partner, and who has the artist's agency in mind, facilitates cooperation for everyone.

Ashley Tucker, Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director of AFI, insists on the long duration of the residency as a key element: 'Many of us having worked with artists at risk, know that **a few weeks or months aren't that helpful for at-risk artists trying to establish themselves**, so the length of the programme was fundamental for the goals to settle in, not just creatively but also personally'.

In terms of structure, the coalition model can be very replicable, as it allows for a holistic approach and it can start very small – one artist per year, with a handful of trusted partners, and year by year the programme will grow. AFI observes that it would be good that already-existing residency programmes all over the world would add a component to accommodate artists at risk through a coalition model. Having gone through numerous iterations, this model made it possible for AFI to successfully achieve their objectives with almost no funding for the first eight years.

Finally, flexibility is a requirement when working within a context that is in constant flux. As Gracie from AFI highlights, the loss in funding in the arts and the complexity of US immigration policy is making it necessary for the programme to shift priorities towards artists already based in the USA, demonstrating that even established programmes need to continually adapt and evolve.

#### Acknowledgements to interviewees

Ashley Tucker, Co-Executive Director, Artistic Freedom Initiative, New York City, NY

Gracie Golden, Resettlement and Partnerships Manager, Artistic Freedom Initiative, New York City, NY

Rachel Switlick, Artistic Liaison and Advocate for SHIM: NYC, Tamizdat, New York City, NY



# About the researchers

**Lina Allia** is the Development and Cooperations Coordinator at Radio Grenouille/Euphonia in Marseille and a PhD candidate in Cultural Studies (CIFRE: Euphonia, Université Lumière Lyon 2, and On the Move). Her research examines the evolving landscape of international cultural cooperation, with a particular focus on the role of intermediaries, digital transitions, and decolonial movements. Born in Algeria, Lina has a background in curation, production, and project management within the Mediterranean region.

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**Yamam Al-Zubaidi** is an independent researcher specializing in European equality law as well as diversity, with a focus on the cultural sector.

He has extensive experience in Swedish and European equality law, including over 10 years with the Swedish Equality Ombudsman. Additionally, he has served as the Equality and Diversity Manager at the National Theatre of Sweden. Yamam has been a member of various EU expert groups, such as the working group on Equality Data Collection in the EU (2015–2016) and the European Expert Network on Culture (2021–2024).

He holds a Master of Arts in Decision, Risk, and Policy Analysis from Stockholm University, as well as a Master of Laws (LL.M) in Comparative, European, and International Laws from the European University Institute (EUI), where he is currently pursuing a PhD in EU Law. Yamam speaks Arabic, English, Russian, and Swedish.

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**Houari Bouchenak** is a curator and researcher. A member and co-founder of Collective 220 (Algeria) and founder and coordinator of La Maison de La Photo (Tlemcen, Algeria), he has been collaborating since 2007 with several

cultural institutions in the Mediterranean basin on the development and coordination of artistic and cultural projects, including currently Jiser in Barcelona. After obtaining a degree in industrial chemistry from the University of Tlemcen, he continued his studies in applied cultural and intercultural projects (IPCI), then in research and creation in fine arts at the University of Bordeaux-Montaigne (France). He currently devotes part of his time to research, questioning the notions of ‘reality’ and ‘hospitality’ through images and text, while pursuing doctoral studies at the University of Barcelona. His work focuses primarily on what constitutes the human condition through temporal spaces marked by memory, displacement, and traces.

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**Mary Ann DeVlieg** is an independent consultant. She has been a case worker for artists persecuted and at risk since 2009, and holds a PhD concerning policies and practices regarding artists impacted by displacement. She works closely with the Council of Europe’s Free to Create – Create To be Free, Culture and Cultural Heritage initiatives, curates and consults for trainings and conferences, including the annual Safe Havens conference.

She founded the EU working group, Arts-Rights-Justice, and was a co-founder of the Arts-Rights-Justice Academy, University of Hildesheim. With a focus on the SWANA region since 1993, she has evaluated international cultural collaboration projects, policies and programmes for the European Commission’s culture, research, and international development programmes, the EESC and private foundations.

A former Secretary General of IETM (1994–2013), an international network for contemporary performing arts, she founded/co-founded On the Move and the Roberto Cimetta Fund for Mobility in the Mediterranean, and is currently a member



of the Boards of Ettijahat – Independent Culture and SH|FT Safe Havens Freedom Talks.

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**Yohann Floch** is the Director of Operations at On the Move, the international network dedicated to artistic and cultural mobility, and the Director of FACE, a resource platform that facilitates European capacity-building programmes in the contemporary performing arts field. Throughout his career, Yohann has designed, coordinated, and contributed to numerous European cooperation projects and pilot international collaborations while working for independent arts organisations and cultural institutions. He serves governmental bodies and private foundations as external expert and leads or co-authors cultural policy reports. Previously, Yohann held various leadership positions, including Secretary General of the European Dancehouse Network, Director of Skåne's International Resource Office, Coordinator of Dansehallerne's Nordic dance network, and Coordinator of the Circostrada network.

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**Milica Ilić** is a cultural worker with extensive experience in transnational cooperation within contemporary performing arts. She is particularly invested in exploring organisational practices in the arts sector that are grounded in equity and solidarity. Milica supports the strategic development of cooperation projects and actively contributes to the transnational arts scene as a trainer, educator, researcher, and evaluator. She has authored and co-authored numerous articles, policy papers, and analyses.

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**Martina Hájková** is a lawyer and cultural manager currently working with the Association of the Professional Theatres in the Czech Republic, National Theatre and National Institute for Culture (project of InfoPoint for the cultural sector). She has rich experience not only in theoretical but especially practical aspects of

work in the cultural sector which she passes on to art school students in preparation for the transition to practice. She is now starting her PhD focusing on the current issues of international cooperation in the performing arts in the context of the posting of workers, social security and international taxation.

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**Dace Kiulina** is a consultant in culture and development cooperation, with over 15 years of experience in designing and managing international cultural cooperation projects, and in conducting analyses and evaluations in the fields of culture, creative industries and arts. Over the past five years, she has also specialised in supporting arts organisations with fundraising. Her work spans various geographical regions, including Europe, Latin America, North and Sub-Saharan Africa.

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**Jordi Baltà Portolés** works as a freelance consultant, researcher and trainer in cultural policy, sustainability and international cultural relations. His areas of interest include cultural diversity, local cultural policy, cultural rights and the relationship between culture and sustainability. He is an advisor on culture and sustainable cities at the Committee on Culture of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), a member of the UNESCO Expert Facility for the implementation of the 2005 Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, and regularly works with other organisations, including Trànsit Projectes and On the Move. Jordi teaches at the MA in Cultural Management of the Open University of Catalonia (UOC) and Universitat de Girona (UdG) and at other graduate and postgraduate programmes. He holds a PhD from the universities of Girona and Melbourne.

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**Franziska Stambke** is a researcher and communications expert currently working as the Communications & PR Officer at Liveurope. She has previously worked as a Communications Officer at EUNIC (European Union National Institutes for Culture). Franziska has contributed to in-depth research projects within the cultural sector. She specialises in translating research insights into impactful communication strategies and is dedicated to driving the cultural sector forward through evidence-based approaches.

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**Fairooz Tamimi** is a published author and a serial entrepreneur focused on the power of culture, innovation and diversity in making the transformation towards social justice. Currently, Fairooz is the Director of Action for Hope, a Belgian non-profit organisation founded in 2015 to support artistic and cultural initiatives in communities affected by conflict, displacement, and marginalisation, particularly in the Arab region. Before that Fairooz was the director of strategic development in Trans Europe Halles, a European network of cultural centres initiated by citizens and artists.

Fairooz worked in the Middle East as the Director of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture (AFAC) and the Jordan Film Fund Manager, among other leadership roles in NGOs, private and public sector organisations. Relocating to Sweden in 2013, Fairooz worked in the public and private sectors, focusing specifically on sustainability, innovation and social justice. Fairooz is the founder of the 'Immigrants Stand up Comedy Network' and 'C/O; the first business accelerator for highly skilled immigrants in Scandinavia'. Fairooz is the 'Winner of Herbert Felix Institute Award for Openness & Diversity 2016.

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**Claire Rosslyn Wilson** is the Data Collector and Analyst for On the Move and she also works as the Editor for the Asia Europe Foundation culture platform ASEF culture360. Born in Naarm/Melbourne (Australia) and based in Barcelona (Spain), she has over 10 years of experience as a freelance cultural writer, researcher and editor working with non-profit and cultural organisations in the Asia-Pacific and Europe (such as the Committee on Culture of the United Cities and Local Governments, IN SITU, Østfold Internasjonale Teater, European Dance Development Network, City of Bilbao, and others). She also has a PhD focused on translocal creative practice.

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**Rana Yazaji** is a researcher, trainer, and cultural manager. She serves as the co-director of 'Arts and International Cooperation' at Zurich University of the Arts and is currently conducting artistic research on contemporary arts and popular culture during and post-war contexts. Her work combines research and cultural practices, focusing on three interconnected levels: creative initiatives, institutional building, and policy discussions.

In 2011, she co-founded Ettijahat – Independent Culture, a Syrian organisation formed to support independent arts and culture actors in implementing social and political transformation. In 2014, Yazaji became the Executive Director of Culture Resource (Al Mawred Al Thaqafy), a regional cultural organisation active in the Arab region.

Yazaji completed a BA in Theatre Studies from the Higher Institute of Dramatic Arts (Damascus, 2001), an MA in Design and Management of Cultural Projects from the New Sorbonne University (Paris, 2005), and an MA in Theatre Directing and Dramaturgy from the University of Paris X (Paris, 2006).

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